

Mahatma Gandhi


125 Years

Edited by
B R Nanda

This book commemorates the 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi with sixty-four articles by distinguished writers from forty-three countries. Some of the articles provide fascinating glimpses of Gandhi's personality and times, but most of them make a serious effort to understand his ideas and methods and their significance for our times. Some of these ideas – such as on non-violence, means and ends, religious tolerance and human rights – which seemed wholly utopian to Gandhi's critics at the beginning of this century, when they were first propounded, have acquired a fresh relevance and urgency for a generation confronted with looming threats of nuclear proliferation, ethnic strife, religious fundamentalism, political terrorism and ecological devastation.

Mahatma Gandhi

125 Years



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Mahatma Gandhi

125 Years

Remembering Gandhi
Understanding Gandhi
Relevance of Gandhi

Edited by
B R Nanda

INDIAN COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS
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&
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FOREWORD

Almost a year ago, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) decided to bring out a special issue of its English language quarterly, *Indian Horizons*, dedicated to the 125th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi. Some 46 years after he was felled by an assassin's bullet, how did the world see Gandhiji? How did the world remember him? These questions were what we wanted this special issue to address.

The response, from heads of state and government, from scholars and poets, has been overwhelming. These are articles written by some of those who knew Gandhiji, and by others whose lives were transformed through indirect knowledge of Gandhiji's life and the example that he set. But all of them, in one way or another, pay tribute to the man who created the non-violent weapon of Truth Force or Satyagraha, with which he fought oppression and tyranny. The story of Gandhiji is the story of India's freedom struggle, but is also more than that. It is the story of the universal struggle against oppression and the struggle for justice and freedom.

There are many to whom the ICCR owes its gratitude for the considerable work that has gone into bringing out this volume. I do hope I am forgiven if I do not elaborate on this with a list of names, but I would like to single out Dr. B.R. Nanda, the eminent Gandhian scholar, who agreed to be our guest-editor and without whose tireless efforts and deep scholarship this special issue would perhaps not have been possible.

This issue also marks another major landmark in our efforts

to strengthen the publications programme of the ICCR, which is a very important part of the Council's activities but perhaps less well-known than its role in the area of performing arts. The publications programme is intrinsic to ICCR's mandate of increasing our cultural interaction with other countries. Through these books we open windows, and build bridges, for greater understanding between peoples. Our ideal is best expressed in Gandhiji's own words:

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet...

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "S. S. Mukherjee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first two initials "S. S." clearly visible before the surname "Mukherjee".

(Shiv Shankar Mukherjee)

Director General

January 30, 1995
New Delhi

Indian Council for Cultural Relations

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INTRODUCTION

Margaret Bourke-White, a correspondent of the *Life* magazine, who was the last journalist to interview Gandhi, a few hours before his assassination, confessed in her book *Half Way To Freedom*: “It took me the better part of two years to respond to the undeniable greatness of this man”. She did better than many contemporaries of Gandhi, who took much longer to respond to him, or even failed to respond at all. His campaign against racial discrimination in South Africa was quite an ordeal for General Smuts, who wrote to a friend in 1914: “The saint has left our shores, I sincerely hope for ever.” However, twenty-five years later, Smuts recalled that it was his “fate to be the antagonist of a man for whom even then I had the highest respect... Men like him redeem us all from a sense of commonplaceness and futility and are an inspiration to us not to be weary in well-doing.”

During his thirty years’ long struggle against foreign rule, Gandhi met with persistent suspicion and opposition from the British. Few of them may have gone so far as Archbishop Cosmo Lang who, in a letter to Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy of India, described Gandhi as “a mystic, a fanatic and an anarchist”, but most of them would have agreed with Irwin’s successor, Lord Reading, who wrote home after his first meeting with the Mahatma: “Mr. Gandhi’s religious and moral views are, I believe, admirable, but I confess that I find it difficult to understand the practice of them in politics”.

Most British politicians, civil servants and journalists tended to view Gandhi primarily as an astute politician determined to

destroy the British Raj. As late as February 1947, Lord Wavell, the last but one Viceroy, in a letter to King George VI, described Gandhi as "a most inveterate enemy of the British". It was not easy for the guardians of the British Raj to see the intellectual and moral roots of the struggle for political liberation under Gandhi's leadership. They failed to see that this struggle was directed not against Britain or the British people, but against British imperialism. They failed to appreciate, what was most important from Gandhi's standpoint, the non-violent basis of the struggle. Indeed, they doubted whether it could remain non-violent, and in any case they saw no particular virtue in being evicted from India non-violently.

Gandhi's nationalism was no narrow creed. As far back as 1924, in his presidential address to the Belgaum Congress, he said, "The better mind of the world desires today not absolutely independent States, warring against one another, but a federation of friendly inter-dependent States". He even envisaged the retention of the British connection after India attained independence "on perfectly honourable and absolutely equal terms," thus forecasting the conversion of the British Commonwealth from a white man's club into the multi-racial Commonwealth of today. Twenty years after Gandhi's death, the British historian, Arnold Toynbee, aptly described Gandhi "as much a benefactor of Britain as of his own country. He made it impossible for us to go on ruling India, but at the same time he made it possible for us to abdicate without rancour and without dishonour."

Curiously enough, it was not only the British government which was baffled by the novelty of Gandhi's ideas and methods. When he returned from South Africa in 1915, he struck J.B. Kripalani,—who later became one of his faithful lieutenants—as "an eccentric specimen of an England-returned Indian". Of the eminent Indian political leaders of the time none was closer to Gandhi than Gokhale, but even Gokhale laughed at some of the opinions expressed in that seminal manifesto of Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj* (1909), and told him: "After you have stayed in India, your views will correct themselves."

The fact is that Gandhi's strictures on industrialism and Western civilization in *Hind Swaraj* grated on the ears of most Indian politicians of the day. The English-educated middle class in India had, since the days of Raja Rammohun Roy, sought to remake itself in the Western image. That western education was the open sesame to modernisation, that India must tread, however

slowly, the path of British constitutional evolution, that India's economic salvation lay in industrialising on the European model—all these were self-evident propositions to the educated elite. Further, Gandhi's religious idiom jarred on them; his views on education, machinery and a village-based civilization did not fit in with their image of a 'modern' society. This scepticism continued long after Gandhi became the pre-eminent figure on the Indian political stage and the idol of the masses. Some of his closest colleagues were troubled by doubts even while they followed his lead. Jawaharlal Nehru voiced his doubts in his autobiography published in 1934. This was the time when Gandhi was the chosen target of socialists and communists, who talked of the inevitability of class-war, and questioned the efficacy of non-violence in tackling India's political and social problems. Among his sharpest critics were M.N. Roy and Jayaprakash Narayan. What the critics failed to see was that Gandhi had adapted traditional ideas and symbols to modern needs and transformed them into instruments of social and political change.

With the passage of time, the initial scepticism of most of Gandhi's colleagues and critics gave way to better understanding, and finally, to conversion. Nehru felt closer to Gandhi when he wrote the *Discovery of India* (1944) than when he had penned his *Autobiography* (1934); in his last years he was speaking almost in Gandhian accents, pleading for the linking of "scientific and spiritual approach to politics." M.N. Roy, who had flayed Gandhi for his religious approach to politics, confessed that he had failed to detect the secular approach beneath the religious idiom, and the essentially "moral, humanist and cosmopolitan" character of Gandhi's message. As for Jayaprakash Narayan, he made a rapid transition from a rebel to a devotee, and spent the rest of his life in expounding and invoking Gandhian concepts and methods.

A similar process of conversion was going on in the West. The fact that most of the 'Great' Powers of Europe possessed colonies before the Second World War, and Gandhi had clashed head-on with the British empire, had hindered the process of conversion. A few exceptional individuals, such as Romain Rolland, Albert Einstein and C.F. Andrews, were quick to recognise Gandhi's stature, but the common image of the Mahatma in Europe and America in the 1920s and 1930s oscillated between that of a whimsical saint and that of an astute politician. An English Quaker, John S. Hoyland noted in 1931 that

satyagraha was looked upon in the West... as ridiculous and undignified. Working class audiences, when told about it, characterised it as "grown-up sulks". More educated audiences regarded it with cold disfavour. It is too exotic, too unconventional, in a word, too Christian for us.

In the last years of Gandhi's life there was evidence that some of the Western thinkers were beginning to respond to Gandhi. A striking example was that of the eminent British novelist, Aldous Huxley. In his book *Jesting Pilate* published in the 1920s, he had asserted that "to one fresh from India and Indian spirituality, Henry Ford seemed a greater man than the Buddha". In a letter to his scientist brother, Julian Huxley, he ridiculed Gandhi as a man "who plays the ascetic in his loin-cloth." However, in his *Science, Liberty and Peace*, published in 1945, Aldous Huxley argued that the record of Gandhi's achievements was not irrelevant to the historical and psychological situation of the West. He echoed Gandhi's doubts about industrialism, which could make life fundamentally unlivable for all, and suggested that scientists should work on small-scale machinery, cooperatives, and natural sources of energy like the sun and the wind. And finally in the Gandhi Memorial Number of *Visva Bharati*, he wrote

Gandhi's social and economic ideas are based upon a realistic appraisal of man's nature and the nature of his position in the universe... He knew on the one hand that the cumulative triumphs of advancing organization and progressive technology cannot alter the basic fact that man is an animal of no great size and in most cases of very modest abilities. Men, he said, should do their actual living and working in communities of a size commensurate with their bodily and moral stature, communities small enough to permit genuine self-government and assumption of personal responsibilities, federated with large units in such a way that the temptation to abuse great power should not arise.

In 1944 Albert Einstein, the greatest scientist of the day, paid a memorable tribute to Gandhi

as a leader of his people, unsupported by any outward authority; a politician whose success rests not upon craft or mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force; a man of wisdom and humility, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people... a man who has confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being, and thus

at all times risen superior. Generations to come it may be, will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.

After Gandhi's death, some of the barriers to understanding which had existed in his lifetime disappeared. Colonialism was dead or dying: the life and thought of its principal antagonist could, therefore, be seen without the imperialist blinkers. Further, some of the complacency and even arrogance, which unlimited vistas of progress had inspired in the industrialized countries, had begun to wear off. It was becoming clear that while science and technology had rendered tremendous service to mankind, they were likely before long (to use the words of Andre Malraux) "to present their bill, and the bill was going to be heavy". The looming threats of a nuclear holocaust and ecological disaster had chastening effects.

Several of Gandhi's ideas such as rejection of colonialism, militarism and materialism, when they were first propounded in the early years of the twentieth century, were described at best as utopian and at worst as pre-modern, obscurantist and impracticable. Gandhi himself denied that he was visionary: "I do not accept the claim of saintliness," he said. "I am of the earth, earthly." He claimed neither infallibility nor finality for his ideas. He modestly described Satyagraha, his method of non-violent resistance to political or social injustice, as a "science in the making". "I can say without arrogance and in all humanity," he wrote in 1925, "that my message and methods are in essence meant for the entire world." Nevertheless, the fact remains that between 1915, when he returned from South Africa and in 1948 when he died, he went abroad only once in 1931 to attend the Round Table Conference in England. He did not avail of the numerous invitations which came to him from Europe and America. He felt that he must show the efficacy of his methods in India, before he recommended them to other countries. However, his ideas had already begun to inspire people in other lands. The Norwegians during the Second World War, the people of Czechoslovakia in 1948, and the Poles under Walesa resorted to non-violent resistance against superior might, even though their strategies may not have been wholly or self-consciously Gandhian. African leaders such as Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana have testified to the inspiration they received from Gandhi's writings for their struggle for political liberation. In South Africa the African National Congress was unable to keep up its adherence

to non-violence against apartheid after the Sharpville massacre, but its leaders, especially Nelson Mandela, have in the period of transition to a multi-racial democratic system, consciously adopted a policy of national reconciliation and integration very much in the spirit of Gandhi. In the United States, the movement for civil rights and racial equality bore a strong impress of Gandhi's ideas. Martin Luther King wrote: "Jesus Christ gave the motivation and Gandhi showed the method... Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale."

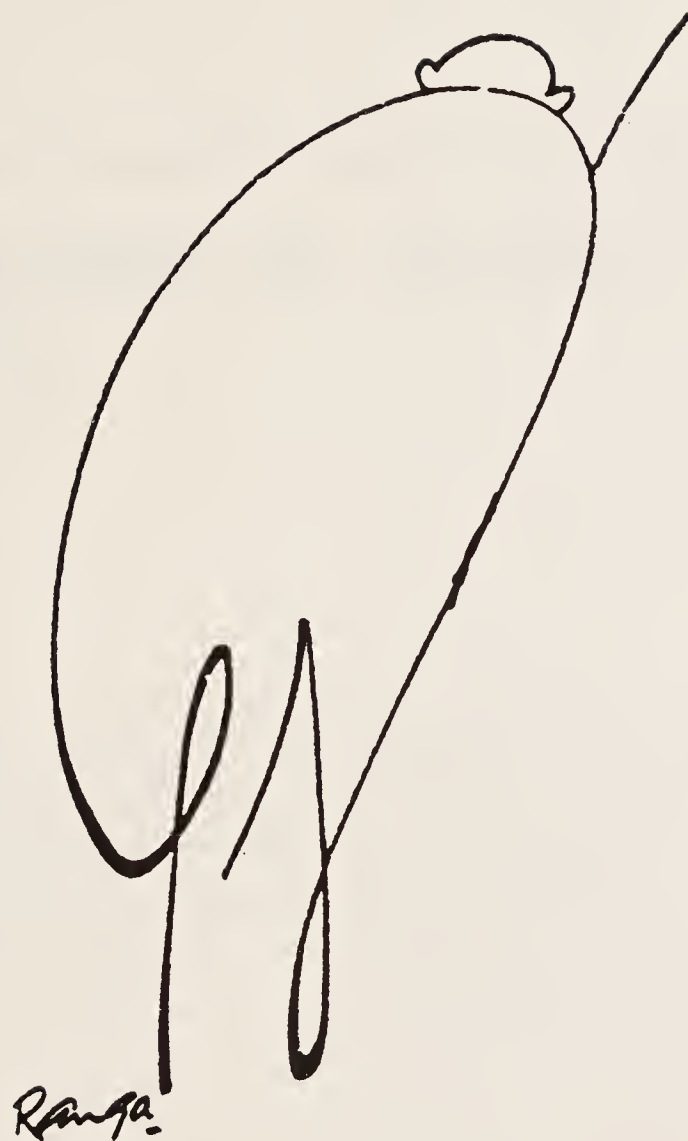
When Gandhi's birth centenary was celebrated in 1969, rich tributes were paid to him all over the world. A large number of his colleagues and contemporaries were still alive and could recount their reminiscences of the great man. Twenty-five years later—as the articles in this volume would indicate—the trend is not only to admire him, but to understand him, and to study the relevance of his ideas to our predicament at the end of the century. The cold war is over, but the world is witnessing bitter ethnic, religious and national antagonisms. Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia are the latest examples of the new pitch which hatred and violence have reached. Then there is the global threat of resource-exhaustion and ozone-depletion, articulated in the "concern," of the Union of Concerned Scientists, comprising nearly 1600 scientists, including most of the Nobel Laureates, who signed a "Global Warning to Humanity" that the damage to our planet might soon become too great and that no nation would escape injury. Gandhi's prophetic warning "that the earth provides enough to satisfy everyman's need but not everyman's greed" is coming true. The authors of the United Nations Human Development Report of 1993 spoke almost in Gandhian terms when they wrote "Development must be woven around people and not people around development."

Gandhi had no illusions about the ready acceptance of his ideas. A reformer, who seeks fundamental changes in society and politics is bound to provoke criticism and opposition. Gandhi remarked once that his non-violent campaigns usually passed through five stages: indifference, ridicule, abuse, repression and respect. And when a campaign survived repression, "it invariably commanded respect, which is another name for success." He combined boundless faith, ceaseless labour and endless patience in the pursuit of his goals. He was also an incorrigible optimist:

Marjorie Sykes quotes him saying a few weeks before his death:
"if my faith burns bright, as I hope it will even if I stand alone,
I shall be alive in the grave, and what is more, speaking from it."

New Delhi
January 30, 1995

B.R. Nanda



Remembering Gandhi

THE PILGRIM IN QUEST OF TRUTH

Jawaharlal Nehru*

Nearly three and a half years have gone by since Gandhiji passed away. The manner of his death was the culmination and perfect climax to an astonishing career. Even during his life innumerable stories and legends had grown around him, and now he seems almost a legendary figure, one in the great line of India's sages and heroes and wise men. A new generation grows up to whom he is almost a name, a great name to be revered, but nevertheless a name. Within a few more years there will not be many left who have come in personal contact with him and had experience of that vivid, virile and magnificent personality. The legend will grow and take many shapes, sometimes with little truth in it. Succeeding generations will remember him and pay honour to him. As is India's way, we shall add him to our pantheon and celebrate the day of his birth and the day of his passing away. We shall shout *jai* when his name is mentioned and perhaps feel a little elated in the process and that we have done our duty to him.

What gods there are, I know not and am not concerned about them. But there are certain rare qualities which raise a man above the common herd and appear to make him as made of different clay. The long story of humanity can be considered from

Foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru in T.D. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi* (Publication Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1st Edition 1951).

many points of view; it is a story of the advance and growth of man and the spirit of man, it is also a story full of agony and tragedy. It is a story of masses of men and women in ferment and in movement, and it is also the story of great and outstanding personalities who have given content and shape to that movement of masses.

In that story Gandhi occupies and will occupy a pre-eminent place. We are too near him to judge him correctly. Some of us came into intimate contact with him and were influenced by that dominating and very lovable personality. We miss him terribly now, for he had become a part of our own lives. With us the personal factor is so strong that it comes in the way of a correct appraisal. Others, who did not know him so intimately, cannot perhaps have full realization of the living fire that was in this man of peace and humility. So both these groups lack proper perspective or knowledge. Whether that perspective will come in later years when the problems and conflicts of today are matters for the historian, I do not know. But I have no doubt that in the distant, as in the near, future this towering personality will stand out and compel homage. It may be that the message which he embodied will be understood and acted upon more in later years than it is today. That message was not confined to a particular country or a community. Whatever truth there was in it was a truth applicable to all countries and to humanity as a whole. He may have stressed certain aspects of it in relation to the India of his day, and those particular aspects may cease to have much significance as times and conditions change. The kernel of that message was, however, not confined to time or space. And if this is so, then it will endure and grow in the understanding of man.

He brought freedom to India and in that process he taught us many things which were important for us at the moment. He told us to shed fear and hatred, and of unity and equality and brotherhood, and of raising those who had been suppressed, and of the dignity of labour and of the supremacy of things of the spirit. Above all, he spoke and wrote unceasingly of truth in relation to all our activities. He repeated that Truth was to him God and God was Truth. Scholars may raise their eyebrows, and philosophers and cynics repeat the old question: What is Truth? Few of us dare to answer that question with any assurance and it may be that the answer itself is many-sided and our limited intelligence cannot grasp the whole. But, however limited the functioning of our minds may be or our capacity for intuition,

each one of us must, I suppose, have some limited idea of truth, as he sees it. Will he act up to it, regardless of consequences, and not compromise with what he himself considers an aberration from it? Will he even in search of a right goal compromise with the means to attain it? Will he subordinate means to ends?

It is easy to frame this question, rather rhetorically, as if there was only one answer. But life is terribly complicated and the choices it offers are never simple. Perhaps, to some extent, an individual, leading his individual and rather isolated life, may endeavour with some success to answer that question for himself. But where he is concerned not only with his own actions but with those of many others, when fate or circumstance has put him in a position of moulding and directing others, what then is he to do? How is a leader of men to function? If he is a leader, he must lead and not merely follow the dictates of the crowd, though some modern conceptions of the functioning of democracy would lead one to think that he must bow down to the largest number. If he does so, then he is no leader and he cannot take others far along the right path of human progress. If he acts singly, according to his own lights, he cuts himself off from the very persons whom he is trying to lead. If he brings himself down to the same level of understanding as others, then he has lowered himself, been untrue to his own ideal, and compromised that truth. And once such compromises begin, there is no end to them and the path is slippery. What then is he to do? It is not enough for him to perceive truth or some aspect of it. He must succeed in making others perceive it also.

The average leader of men, especially in a democratic society, has continually to adapt himself to his environment and to choose what he considers the lesser evil. Some adaptation is inevitable. But as this process goes on, occasions arise when that adaptation imperils the basic ideal and objective. I suppose there is no clear answer to this question and each individual and each generation will have to find its own answer.

The amazing thing about Gandhi was that he adhered, in all its fullness, to his ideals, his conception of truth, and yet he did succeed in moulding and moving enormous masses of human beings. He was not inflexible. He was very much alive to the necessities of the moment, and he adapted himself to changing circumstances. But all these adaptations were about secondary matters. In regard to the basic things he was inflexible and firm as a rock. There was no compromise in him with what he considered

evil. He moulded a whole generation and raised them above themselves, for the time being at least. That was a tremendous achievement.

Does that achievement endure? It brought results which undoubtedly endure. And yet it brings some reaction in its train also. For people, compelled by some circumstance, to raise themselves above their normal level, are apt to sink back even to a lower level than previously. We see today something like that happening. We saw that reaction in the tragedy of Gandhi's own assassination. What is worse is the general lowering of standards, when Gandhi's whole life was devoted to the raising of these very standards. Perhaps this is a temporary phase and people will recover from it and find themselves again. I have no doubt that, deep in the consciousness of India, the basic teachings of Gandhi will endure and will affect our national life.

No man can write a real life of Gandhi, unless he is as big as Gandhi. So we can expect to have no real and fully adequate life of this man. Difficult as it is to write a life of Gandhi, this task becomes far more difficult because his life has become an intimate part of India's life for half a century or more. Yet it may be that if many attempt to write his life, they may succeed in throwing light on some aspects of this unique career and also give others some understanding of this memorable period of India's history.

Tendulkar has laboured for many years over this book. He told me about it during Gandhiji's lifetime and I remember his consulting Gandhiji a few months before his death. Anyone can see that this work has involved great and devoted labour for many long years. It brings together more facts and data about Gandhi than any book that I know. It is immaterial whether we agree with any interpretation or opinion of the author. We are given here a mass of evidence and we can form our own opinions. Therefore, I consider this book to be of great value as a record not only of the life of a man supreme in his generation, but also of a period of India's history which has intrinsic importance of its own. We live today in a world torn with hatred and violence and fear and passion, and the shadow of war hangs heavily over us all. Gandhi told us to cast away our fear and passion and to keep away from hatred and violence. His voice may not be heard by many in the tumult and shouting of today, but it will have to be heard and understood sometime or other, if this world is to survive in any civilized form.

People will write the life of Gandhi and they will discuss

and criticize him and his theories and activities. But to some of us he will remain something apart from theory—a radiant and beloved figure who ennobled and gave some significance to our petty lives, and whose passing away has left us with a feeling of emptiness and loneliness. Many pictures rise in my mind of this man, whose eyes were often full of laughter and yet were pools of infinite sadness. But the picture that is dominant and most significant is as I saw him marching, staff in hand, to Dandi on the Salt March in 1930. Here was the pilgrim on his quest of Truth, quiet, peaceful, determined and fearless, who would continue that quest and pilgrimage, regardless of consequences. □

2

GANDHI THE PRISONER A COMPARISON

Nelson Mandela

Gandhi threatened the South African Government during the first and second decades of our century as no other man did. He established the first anti-colonial political organisation in the country, if not in the world, founding the Natal Indian Congress in 1894. The African People's Organisation (APO) was established in 1902, the ANC in 1912, so that both were witnesses to and highly influenced by Gandhi's militant satyagraha which began in 1907 and reached its climax in 1913 with the epic march of 5000 workers indentured on the coal mines of Natal. That march evoked a massive response from the Indian women who in turn, provoked the Indian workers to come out on strike. That was the beginning of the marches to freedom and mass stay-away-from-work which became so characteristic of our freedom struggle in the apartheid era. Our Defiance Campaign of 1952, too, followed very much on the lines that Gandhi had set.

So in the Indian struggle, in a sense, is rooted the African. M.K. Gandhi and John Dube, first President of the African National Congress were neighbours in Inanda, and each influenced the other, for both men established, at about the same time, two monuments to human development within a stone's throw of each other, the Ohlange Institute and the Phoenix Settlement. Both institutions suffer today the trauma of the violence that has overtaken that region; hopefully, both will rise again, phoenix-like, to lead us to undreamed heights.

During his twenty-one years in South Africa, Gandhi was sentenced to four terms of imprisonment, the first, on January 10, 1908 to two months, the second, on October 7, 1908 to three months, the third, on February 25, also to three months, and the fourth, on November 11, 1913 to nine months hard labour. He actually served seven months and ten days of those sentences. On two occasions, the first and the last, he was released within weeks because the Government of the day, represented by General Smuts, rather than face satyagraha and the international opprobrium it was bringing the regime, offered to settle the problems through negotiation.

On all four occasions, Gandhi was arrested in his time and at his insistence—there were no midnight raids, the police did not swoop on him—there were no charges of conspiracy to overthrow the state, of promoting the activities of banned organisations or instigating inter-race violence. The State had not yet invented the vast repertoire of so-called “security laws”, that we had to contend with in our time. There was no Terrorism Act, no “Communism Act”, no Internal Security Act, or detentions without trial. The control of the State was not as complete; the Nationalist police state and Nationalist ideology of apartheid were yet to be born. Gandhi was arrested for deliberately breaching laws that were unjust because they discriminated against Indians and violated their dignity and their freedom. He was imprisoned because he refused to take out a registration certificate, or a pass in terms of the Transvaal Asiatic Amendment Act (TARA), and “instigated” others to do likewise.

When apartheid was still in its infancy, we too, like Gandhi, organised arrests in our own time through the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign, but by the end of the sixties, the violence of the State had reached such intensity that passive resistance appeared futile. We were literally pulled out of our beds and dragged into prison. Our Defiance, instead of bringing relief, provoked the Government into passing the so-called security laws in a bid to dam up all resistance. This should not mislead the reader into thinking that Gandhi’s resistance did not provoke harsh measures against him and his followers. The Indians suffered terrible reprisals—they were deported to India and several groups spent time navigating back and forth, between the ports of Bombay and Durban in third class steerage because they refused to disembark in India, insisting they would only do so on their mother soil, South Africa.

Most of those deportees had in fact been born in South Africa and India was for them, a foreign country. Others like Ahmed Cachalia and E.I. Asvat lost their lucrative businesses and were forced into insolvency by their white creditors, not because their businesses were not doing well, but because they resented their 'defiance' and forced them to liquidate their assets and pay them back. Others had their property auctioned, just so that the government could extract the fines the satyagrahis refused to pay for defying unjust laws. Gandhi himself was treated with utmost indignity on several occasions, the like of which was not heaped on us. On two occasions, while being moved from Volksrust to Johannesburg and Pretoria respectively, he was marched from the gaol to the station in prison garb, handcuffed, with his prison kit on his head. Those who saw him were moved to anger and tears. For Gandhi, it was part of his suffering, part of the struggle against inhumanity.

Prison Conditions

There is great similarity in the conditions of imprisonment during our days and Gandhi's. Prison conditions changed dramatically only in the 1980s, despite the pressures exerted at the beginning of the century by Gandhi and his colleagues, and in the latter decades by my colleagues and myself. Access to newspapers, radio and television were allowed, in stages, only in the last decade as, too, were beds. In a sense, I was eased into the prison routine.

My first time in a lock-up was on June 26th 1952 while I was organising the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign. I was held for a few days in a police cell before being released on bail. Gandhi's first imprisonment was without hard labour, in January 1908, and though sentenced to two months, he was released within 19 days. General Smuts, fearful of the momentum the passive resistance struggle was gathering, had him brought by train, from Johannesburg, to his offices in Pretoria to work out a settlement.

I too, was called out with a view to a settlement by the then head of state, Mr P.W. Botha. They drove me to Groote Schuur, but that was in my twenty-sixth year of imprisonment—when the Nationalist Government saw that they could no longer govern the country on their own. Gandhi spent his first term of imprisonment in the Fort in Johannesburg, so did I—in the hospital section as an awaiting trial prisoner in 1962.

Gandhi describes his apprehension on being first convicted: *"Was I to be specially treated as a political prisoner? Was I to be separated from my fellow prisoners?"* he soliloquized. He was facing imprisonment in a British Colony in 1908, and he still, at the time, harboured a residue of belief in British justice. My colleagues and I faced imprisonment in the cells of apartheid; we had no expectations that we would be given privileges because we were political prisoners. We expected the reverse—greater brutality because we were political prisoners. My first conviction was for five years in 1962, following my incognito African "tour". I began serving in Pretoria. Like Gandhi, we experienced the insides of the major Transvaal prisons. Gandhi, however, was never on Robben Island in the Cape, and we were never in Volksrust in the Transvaal.

Gandhi's approach was to accommodate to the prison conditions since, as a satyagrahi, suffering in the path of freedom and justice was part of his creed: We were never satyagrahis in that sense. We did not accept suffering, we reacted against it. I was as unco-operative on my first day of prison as I possibly could be. I refused to wear the prison shorts and I refused to eat the prison food. They gave me long trousers, and food that was somewhat more palatable, but at a heavy price. I was placed in solitary confinement where I discovered that human company was infinitely more valuable than any material advantage.

Clothing and Food

There was practically no difference in the issue of clothing given to us in 1962 and that given to Gandhi in 1908. He records, that *"After being stripped, we were given prison uniforms. We were supplied, each with a pair of short breeches, a shirt of coarse cloth, a jumper, a cap, a towel and a pair of socks and sandals."* (*Indian Opinion*, 02-01-1909) Our issue was almost identical.

Neither was there any difference in the diet, basically porridge, save that we were given a teaspoon of sugar; Gandhi's porridge had no sugar. At lunch, we were served mealies, sometimes mixed with beans. He spent one and a half months on a one-meal-a-day diet of beans.

He did not think it proper to complain, writing,

How can we complain when there are hundreds who accept these things. A complaint must have only one object—to secure relief for other prisoners. How would it mend matters if I were occasionally

to complain to the warder about the small quantity of potatoes and so get him to serve me a little more? I once observed him giving me an additional helping from a portion meant for another, and thereafter I gave up complaining altogether.

He declined any favours offered to him exclusively but accepted improvements when these were shared with his fellow political prisoners. On Robben Island, we observed the same principle.

We took up issues on behalf of all the prisoners, political and non-political, never on behalf of an individual, except when an individual was personally discriminated against. In prison, one's material needs are so straitened that they are reduced to almost nothing, and if in that condition one can still think of one's fellowmen, one's humanity excels and passes all tests for fellow feeling. Gandhi passed that test superbly. I am grateful that I maintained my humanity throughout my internment as did too my immediate colleagues.

Cells

The cells in 1962 were comparable to those during the early 1900s. Gandhi describes his cell in Volksrust:

It had fair ventilation, with two small windows at the top of the cell, half open apertures in the opposite wall. There was no electric light. The cell contained a dim lamp, a bucket of water and a tin tumbler. For natural convenience, a bucket in a tray with disinfectant fluid in it, was placed in a corner. Our bedding consisted of two planks, fixed to three inch legs, two blankets, an apology for a pillow, and matting. (*Indian Opinion*, 07-03-1908)

We were similarly locked up with a bucket for a commode and drinking water in a plastic bottle. Though we had electricity, the lights, controlled from outside, remained on throughout the night. We had no raised planks for sleeping. We slept on a mat, on the floor. Communal cells, in Gandhi's time and ours, usually accommodated 15–20 prisoners, but that varied. The worse Gandhi experienced was sharing a cell, with accommodation for 50, with 150 prisoners. (*Indian Opinion*, 28-03-1908)

The ablution facilities in Gandhi's time were worse than in ours, two large stone basins and two spouts that served as a shower, two buckets for defecation and two for urine—all in the open, since prison regularities did not allow privacy. The one grilling routine that some of his compatriots suffered was absent

from ours. Ahmed Cachalia, for instance, was left in a cold bath with other prisoners for hours and developed pneumonia as a consequence.

Prison Routine

Our prison routine and Gandhi's were remarkably similar, but then why wouldn't they be? In prison everything stands still. There is one way to treat prisoners, and that way doesn't change. During my first decade of imprisonment, we were up at 5.30 a.m., we rushed through our ablutions, folded our bedding and lined it against the wall and stood to attention for inspection.

Once counted, we filed for our breakfast, and then filed to be counted again before being sent to work. Work stopped at 4.30 p.m., when there was further counting; when we reached the compound, we were stripped naked and searched. By 5.30 p.m. we had had our supper and were locked up for the night.

Now let us look Gandhi's account of his prison routine:

The prisoners are counted when they are locked in and when they are let out. A bell is rung at half-past five in the morning to wake up the prisoners. Everyone must then get up, roll up his bedding and wash. The door of the cell is opened at six when each prisoner must stand up with his arms crossed and his bedding rolled up beside him. A sentry then calls the roll. By a similar rule, every prisoner is required to stand beside his bed, while he is being locked up [at night]. When the officials come to inspect the prisoners, they must take off their caps and salute him. All the prisoners wore caps, and it was not difficult to take them off, for there was a rule that they must be taken off, and this was only proper. The order to line up was given by shouting the command *fall in* whenever an official came. The words *fall in* therefore became our daily diet. They meant that the prisoners should fall in line and stand to attention. This happened four or five times a day. The prisoners are locked up at half-past five in the afternoon. They read or converse in the cell up to eight in the evening. At eight, everyone must go to bed, meaning that even if one cannot sleep, one must get into bed. Talking among prisoners after eight constitutes a breach of Gaol Regulations. The Native prisoners do not observe this rule too strictly. The warders on night duty, therefore, try to silence them by knocking against the walls with their truncheons and shouting, *Thula! Thula!* (*Indian Opinion*, 21-03-1908).

Hard Labour

Hard labour is hard, and made infinitely harder by the warder who stands over you and forces you to work beyond your endurance, beyond human endurance. Gandhi, like us, had plenty of hard labour, and both his comrades and mine, survived to tell our tales. He describes a particular day in Volksrust prison.

The day was very hot, all the Indians set to work with great energy. The warder was rather short of temper. He shouted at the prisoners all the time to keep on working. The more he shouted, the more nervous the Indians became. I even saw some of them in tears. One, I noticed, had a swollen foot. I went on urging everyone to ignore the warder and carry on as best he could. I too, got exhausted. There were large blisters on my palms and the lymph was oozing out of them. I was praying to God all the time to save my honour so that I might not break down. The warder started rebuking me. He did so because I was resting. Just then I observed Mr Jhinabhai Desai fainting away. I paused a little, not being allowed to leave the place of work. The warder went to the spot. I found that I too must go and I ran. (*Indian Opinion*, 09-1-1909).

They splashed water on the fainted Jhinabhai and revived him. Jhinabhai was taken to his cell by cab. That hot day repeated itself on Robben Island in the early sixties.

We, like Gandhi's Indians, had been working at a brisk pace for three hours one day, when fatigue set in and some of us stopped to stretch our bodies. The warder was on to us, swearing and shouting. Then he turned to Steven Tefu, old enough to be his grandfather, very erudite, highly educated, and shouted at him, "Get on boy!"

Tefu drew together his dignity and reprimanded the warder in high Dutch, thoroughly confusing him. The outcome for Tefu was better than that for Jhinabhai. As was the experience of Gandhi, we were marched off to work in groups of 30; He writes,

At seven, work starts. On the first day, we had to dig up the soil in a field near the main road for purposes of cultivation. (*Indian Opinion*, 29-5-1909).

They quarried stones and carried them on their heads. We worked on the lime quarries, and the sun shining on the whiteness blinded our eyes. There were times when Gandhi agonised and wondered whether he had done the right thing by exposing his

compatriots to the pain and indignity, but his firm conviction came to his rescue.

If to bear suffering is in itself a kind of happiness, there is no need to be worried by it. Seeing that our sole duty was to break free from our fetters by enduring every hardship rather than remaining bound for life, I felt light in the heart and tried to instill courage in the others.

African Prisoners

During his imprisonment in Pretoria, all his fellow prisoners were Africans (Natives as they were then referred to, even by ourselves), and they, seeing him so different from them, were curious to know what he was doing in prison. Had he stolen, or dealt in liquor?

He explained that he had refused to carry a pass. They understood that perfectly well. "Quite right," they said to him, "the white people are bad." Gandhi had been initially shocked that Indians were classified with Natives in prison; his prejudices were quite obvious, but he was reacting not to "Natives", but criminalised Natives.

He believed that Indians should have been kept separately. However, there was an ambivalence in his attitude for he stated,

It was, however, as well that we were classed with the Natives. It was a welcome opportunity to see the treatment meted out to Natives, their conditions (of life in gaol), and their habits.

All in all, Gandhi must be forgiven those prejudices and judged in the context of the time and the circumstances. We are looking here at the young Gandhi, still to become Mahatma, when he was without any human prejudice, save that in favour of truth and justice.

Confrontations with Criminals

Political prisoners are prisoners of conscience, and as such, very different from other prisoners. The two are bound to meet and mix and the experience can have unpleasant consequences. Gandhi had such experiences, so did I. After my first conviction, I was transported to Pretoria prison in a closed van with a member of the notorious Msomi Gang and as the van reeled and lurched, I was swung against him. I could not trust the man for I feared he was a police plant.

Gandhi writes about a night he spent in Johannesburg prison

in 1909. His fellow prisoners appeared to be wild and murderous and given to "unnatural ways". "Two of them tried to engage him in conversation. When he couldn't understand them, they jeered and laughed at him. Then the one retreated to a bed where another prisoner was lying. The two exchanged obscene jokes, uncovering each other's genitals." (*Indian Opinion*, 1909)

On another occasion, he was assaulted by a prisoner in a lavatory.

The lavatories have open access. There are no doors. As soon as I had occupied one of them, there came along a strong, heavily-built, fearful-looking Native. He asked me to get out and started abusing me. I said I would leave very soon. Instantly, he lifted me up in his arms and threw me out. Fortunately, I caught hold of the door frame and saved myself from a fall. (*Indian Opinion*, 1909)

Gandhi and I shared one great good fortune—we were very much in the public eye and once it got out that some undue suffering or indignity was heaped on us, there was public reaction. The assault on Gandhi became an issue of protest in India and the British parliament and from some liberal white quarters in South Africa.

Solitary Confinement

Gandhi suffered solitary confinement in Johannesburg in 1908 and in Pretoria in 1909, not because he was defiant and uncooperative: Gandhi was a model prisoner; but because the authorities wanted to separate him from his comrades: they feared his influence upon them. His cell was 70 square feet, the floor was covered with pitch, at night there was a constant dim light and the warders switched it on and off four to six times as a warning that they were around. The cell was completely bare. He paced the floor, up and down, and the warder shouted at him, "*Gandhi, stop walking about like that, my floor is being spoilt.*" "*Even when I went for evacuation, a warder stood by to keep watch. If by chance he did not know me, he would shout, Sam come out now.*" Every Indian man was referred to as Sam, or Sammy in those days and much after, even as every African male was John: every African woman was Annie and every Indian woman, Mary.

I recall my own periods in solitary confinement and they were no different. The worst aspect of solitary confinement, apart from being cut off from human company is the deprivation of

exercise and fresh air. It tells on your health. You are given hard labour in your cell, instead of going out with the prison gang. Gandhi's hard labour was sewing together worn out blankets and being the person he was, he tackled it with meticulous care, sitting on the floor and bending over his work, week after week. He developed severe neuralgia and his lungs were infected, but he never shirked his duty.

Gandhi taught himself Tamil in prison, I taught myself Afrikaans. Gandhi writes that one of the most important benefits he derived from being in prison was that he got the opportunity to read books. He read voraciously, whenever he could, even standing below the dim globe, snatching whatever light he could. In three months, he read 30 books, ranging from works by European philosophers like Thoreau to religious scriptures, like the Koran, Bible, Gita, and Upanishads. He read in English and Gujarati. Books were also my refuge, when I was allowed them. Gandhi writes that they rescued the mind from wandering off "like a monkey" and dwelling on unpleasant thoughts. The worse punishment are those unpleasant thoughts, concerns over families, about those who are ill and those in want. Both Gandhi and I went through periods when our spouses were also in prison. On several occasions, his sons, Harilal and Manilal, were also in prison.

Gandhi's most painful experience must have been when he was told that his wife, Kasturbai, was critically ill. He was given the option to pay his fine and rush to her bedside. His commitment to satyagraha would not allow him to do so. He wrote her a letter in Gujarati—it was embargoed by the prison authorities because they couldn't read Gujarati. He had to content himself with sending her a message in his letter to his son. My most trying times in prison were when my son was killed in an accident and when my mother died. I mourned alone.

So endured Gandhi the prisoner at the beginning of our century. Though separated in time, there remains a bond between us, in our shared prison experiences, our defiance of unjust laws and in the fact that violence threatens our aspirations for peace and reconciliation. □

3

MAHATMA GANDHI WILL NOT DIE

Kenneth D. Kaunda

I feel greatly honoured to be asked to express in a few words my appreciation of what Mahatma Gandhi is. Is and not was because I believe genuinely that Mahatma Gandhi cannot die because of what he has done for the human race. He is one of those very few people in human history whose what he stood for continues to grow.

It is not easy, better still it is not possible to express in these few lines who Gandhi is. This is something best left to scholars who are qualified to do that. Let me, therefore, merely draw your reader's attention to a few facts that I consider key ideas in appreciating the life and work of this truly great man.

As I write, Africa—his spiritual home—is celebrating the re-birth of South Africa where his thoughts on *satyagraha* were born and indeed began to crystalise! Here he bred and planted a seed that produced such giants of men as Paramount Chief Luthuli—a great non-violent exponent, an activist of world standards whose works led to his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize! Now we have Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected President of South Africa. He together with his closest late friend and colleague Oliver R. Tambo were close followers of Paramount Chief Luthuli's non-violent struggle. Yes, they were forced to take up an armed struggle, but when their side of the story is fully explained and told, it will be discovered they believed in this Gandhi's philosophy. After all he (Nelson R. Mandela) too together with F. W. de Klerk, has been awarded the nobel peace prize.

We all know that from this continent of Africa, Gandhiji went back to India, greatly moved by the sufferings of the great masses of God's people in India—Note god says "*we have made man in our image*" Gandhiji did not allow his English law culture to stand in his way. His deep concern with the plight of his countrymen, tore him away from that. The response from his beloved countrymen was immediate and terrific!

The ability to inflict pain on himself through self-denial was soon to successfully challenge the greatest and no doubt one of the most effective and widespread empires of his time. An angle of even greater importance was the input and influence his thoughts, words and deeds were to have on the leadership of the Indian National Congress and indeed on the countless millions of his followers in India and beyond.

Countless millions of colonial and other down-trodden peoples began to accept non-violence as a way of *struggle*. Many leaders of the down-trodden or exploited peoples of this our one world accepted, as he did, this form of Struggle not only as a means to an end but in fact, as a way of life. What he taught in this life has attracted many a student of philosophy to it and there can be no doubt at all that humankind east, west, north and south will continue to benefit from this great lover of the human race.

Is this an empty shower of praise from one of his followers? Lest some of your readers shall be tempted to think so, allow me to make a few references to some historical facts.

In this respect, it is moot to begin by pointing out that many former British colonies on this continent—especially where there was no significant number of white or better still—not significant European settlers—got their independence through positive action of non-violent nature.

The slave trade mentality has been one of the most destructive thought-forces acted upon during our time. This has been especially so in the Americas! This evil attitude of mind was not only exercised by whites where the black man is concerned, it was also applied to the indigenous Americans commonly known as Red Indians and to a lesser extent to those called Hispanics. In short the Slave trade mentality led to some of the most evil practices of one American against another.

It is against this background that America—USA to be more specific—produced an American student of Gandhism by name of Martin Luther King (Jr.). This young activist I first met in 1960 soon after I served my last term of imprisonment as guest of Her

Majesty's Government in the then Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland— A bit of digression: As a Northern Rhodesian (future Zambian) I was supposed to be imprisoned here i.e. within today's Zambia, but the powers that ruled over us transferred me to the then Southern Rhodesia, (happily today's Zimbabwe — and this since 1980 when Zimbabwe was reborn, as Zamibia was, in 1964) because they thought I was too dangerous to be imprisoned at home. Incidentally although a non-violent student and activist myself, European settlers in the then Northern Rhodesia called me many ugly names and one of those was black maamba. Those who know something about the snakes kingdom will tell your readers that this is one of the most poisonous snakes! So be it!

A digression alright, so back to Dr. Martin Luther King of USA! Martin Luther King mobilised, politicised and organised millions of African Americans into a powerful and non-violent force. He clearly broke the back-bone of the slave trade mentality.

- Like his mentor he died at the hands of some evil men!
- Like his mentor his work could not be defeated by evil men!
- Like his mentor his work goes unhindered by any machinations of evil men!
- His family led by his dedicated wife Coretta (Scot) King and many leading adherents of all shades of colour continue to guide the programme in USA and beyond!

I began by pointing out that Mahatma Gandhi cannot die! This is true of all Saints and the Mahatma lives on because he is a Saint! His thoughts, words and deeds continue to influence and free millions of people in this our one world. Indeed they will continue to be a positive force for good—powerful enough to challenge, fight and defeat any evil force!

Like any good thing, the Mahatma's programme needs to be exposed to this world by those who believe in its power; by those who believe change for a better human society should come through non-violence. □

4

THE INEXTINGUISHABLE STARLIGHT

Federico Mayor

Drop by drop, drop by drop, the water's force—gentle, flexible, persistent—pierces the rock, the sturdiest pillar yields to the steady liquid thrust. Drop by drop, word by word, the walls that separate us tumble, the gags that silence us and the shackles that bind us are unfastened. We shall go forward together, all different travellers on the road towards bright dawns, armed only with the force of our ideals, with the indomitable will to conquer by inventing new pathways and with songs of peace on our lips. Without rancour, but undocile because the hour of the rebellion of the spirit has arrived. The word counters the sword. There will be no more confrontations, because war has ended.

Navigators of all seas and all shores towards a more harmonious future: war has ended. Learn and remember it well when self-serving voices tell you that there is no alternative but weapons. Only the word. And the courage to hold out our hand even though our forehead and heart burn with memories and wounds that counsel rejection.

Now we shall need to discern the signs that lead to essential things. For only in them shall we find the terms of our reconciliation; the threads with which to weave the multicoloured fabrics of our common garment; the melting pot of our mingled identities, tomorrow's guarantee.

From his small, spare, thin body flowed an inexhaustible fountain, and the arid, rough and cracked earth was turned into

ears of corn and sweet fruits. Clothed in the lightest of garments, a herald and pilgrim. Drop by drop the vessel fills. Drop by drop, the square and highways become rivers of men and women who win the race without spilling blood. Gandhi, the yeast that leavens and gives meaning to huge masses. Gandhi, the sentinel. Gandhi, inextinguishable starlight of so many nights of so many days.

"I learnt from my illiterate but wise mother that all rights to be deserved and preserved came from duty well done."¹ We shall proclaim our rights, word by word, drop by drop. We shall defend them with the same resolve with which we put into practice our duties. Together we shall plant olives and together we shall sow seeds of love where previously there were fences and enclosures.

Word by word. Without yielding, without violence. And we shall be able in this way to look into the depths of our children's eyes. □

Notes & References

1. Letter addressed by Mahatma Gandhi from Bhangi Colony in New Delhi, on 25 May 1947, to Dr. Julian S. Huxley, Director-General of UNESCO, Paris.

5

INSPIRED BY GANDHI

Mary Robinson

During a very memorable State Visit to India in 1993 I was delighted to have the opportunity to visit the Sabarmati Ashram. The date of the visit happened to be 2nd October, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. What I had not expected was to be invited to address a large gathering of school children who were visiting at the same time. Having no prepared script, therefore, I could only reach inside myself and speak from the heart. These are the words I found on that occasion:

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to come here on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. When I was the age of you sitting here on the ground I knew all about Gandhi—he was somebody who inspired me as a young person. He inspired me when I was interested in becoming a lawyer, he inspired me when I was interested in human rights; he inspired me when I was interested in helping the situation of women. And now that I am President of Ireland I find that the values of Gandhi are so relevant to our world.

"The values of truth, the values of non-violence, the values of co-operative working together, of understanding the materials of our earth and working well with them, the esteem of women, the whole approach that he led us with. The moral authority which he had, and which he still has, to inspire our world. So you can imagine, since I have for so long esteemed and admired Gandhi, that it is for me a very personal moment—that I will

never forget—to come here and to be in the place where he lived for so many years, and from which he went on the famous salt march, and where he instilled the ideas of productive work, of the way of doing things.

“And I would like to say on my own behalf as President of Ireland, and on behalf of the people of Ireland, how much we esteem and value the enormous contribution of Mahatma Gandhi, of Gandhiji, to the whole world. It is the highlight of my visit here to India that I might have the opportunity to come here on his birth anniversary and add my tribute and thank him for having inspired me so much during my own life, and having inspired so many people, for having shown the way as I saw in a practical application through an organisation such as the Self Employed Women’s Association, SEWA, that I visited earlier today before coming along to the Ashram. So I must say I think Gandhi would be pleased at the way that his principles are still of such relevance and are being followed.

“And I would say that India is a country that is greatly admired by my country, Ireland. We admire India as the largest democracy in the world, and we admire you for your commitment to principles of compassion and tolerance and respect for each others’ religions and each others’ backgrounds and culture. Gandhi was the inspiring force behind that. So I have been delighted to pay tribute to him.”

6

GANDHI, WORKERS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Alec Erwin

Throughout the history of humanity a person from another area, tribe, nation or even continent has had a profound effect on the destiny of particular peoples. This is undoubtedly the case with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who, as one of the great figures of the twentieth century, had a significant impact on South Africa.

Jawaharlal Nehru said of Gandhi:

Tagore and Gandhi have undoubtedly been the two outstanding and dominating figures of India in this first half of the twentieth century.

Nehru continues in his comparison of these two great men to say of Gandhi:

Gandhi, more a man of the people, almost the embodiment of the Indian peasant, represented the other ancient tradition of India, that of renunciation and asceticism. And yet Tagore was primarily a man of thought, Gandhi of concentrated and ceaseless activity.

This assessment of Gandhi was being made by Nehru as he wrote the *Discovery of India* whilst in prison between April and September 1944. This was, of course, long after Gandhi's direct impact on South Africa which ended in July 1914.

Yet this assessment by Nehru seems particularly appropriate for the purposes of this introduction. Gandhi's leadership attributes and the role he played, influenced the future course of political struggle in South Africa and his methods continued to have relevance for workers in the struggles of the 1980s, and 1990s.

No doubt it was also the case that his experience in South Africa was to influence his conduct in the Indian liberation struggle.

The link between Gandhi's use of satyagraha in the first part of this century and the use of mass action by workers in the 1980s and 1990s is, on the face of it, a tenuous one, but may in fact prove to be quite direct upon more careful examination.

It is all too easy to either over-or under-estimate personal contributions to the course of history. Gandhi's involvement in South Africa arose out of larger events that were to shape much of history—in particular that of the working class. But there can be little doubt, as Nehru points out, that Gandhi's conception of protest played a crucial role in India and surely in South Africa. In this brief introduction I want to reflect on the political complexities of mass action—complexities that Gandhi understood extremely well and which his campaigns in South Africa illustrate so clearly. It also seems appropriate to reflect on how a democratic South Africa can build on the link with India that Gandhi was so instrumental in forgoing.

Race and the Working Class

One of the most stimulating debates in South Africa has been (and no doubt still is) around the weight, significance and degree of causality that race or class or a combination thereof had in South African society.

A rich debate on historiography emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Marxists, liberal, neo-Marxist, neo-liberal and conservative wielded their papers, doctorates and polemics like so many swords through a maze of conferences, seminars and clandestine publications. These were heady days, but standing back, it is clear that the political, social and economic histories of many countries are fundamentally affected by a huge surge of migration as capitalism was inserted into these countries in the second half of the nineteenth century. Plantation agriculture and mining were necessary to feed the furnaces of industrialisation in Europe, but were at odds with the social formations within which these resources were located.

The result was a titanic clash of peoples, cultures and classes that resulted in a very complex process of proletarianisation. In South Africa the imposition of a migrant labour system to maintain a low money-wage structure for the mines shaped our society and remains some 100 years later a major socio-economic challenge.

However, all too often—to start sugar plantations or to build railways—an urgent supply of a captive form of wage labour was essential. Measures to obtain this supply at short notice within the society were politically, socially and very often militarily difficult and time-consuming. The solution lay in the socio-economic ravages of imperialism within areas of India and China. The British Empire was able to move indentured labour around the Empire to meet specific needs. So from the 1860s, Indian indentured labour was recruited into Natal sugar plantations. As a result, race immediately coincided with a particular location within the proletariat. The indigenous African peoples retained access to land and were compelled (or in certain situations could elect) to perform wage labour for the purposes of meeting enforced monetised tax obligations or to make purchases in the monetised economy. A significant white proletariat was only to emerge later and it was to benefit from the political power of the British Colonial authority. The Indian and Chinese indentured labourers had no access to land, were not free labour and were disadvantaged in the struggle over political power—the struggle that Gandhi was to take up.

Each strata—racially defined—was subject to different conditions of reproduction. A white proletariat—dependent entirely on wage income for survival—feared cheap indentured labour and migrant labour. Likewise indentured labour feared migrant labour. Located at different points within the process of proletarianisation, white, Indian and African workers were also differentially located in the balance of political power.

The white imperial power had to subordinate the indigenous pre-capitalist society if capitalism was to expand. Yet for the same reason they had at times to bring in indentured labour. When this was followed by traders and professional persons white settler monopoly of these activities was threatened. Whilst the expansion of capitalism represented a powerful class interest, racism was the most effective political and ideological means of ensuring a supply of labour while suppressing the indigenous social formation. This imperative overrode the possibility of conferring class-based rights on Indian traders as opposed to indentured Indian

labourers. This dilemma had perplexed South Africa's racist regime for decades and by the time they attempted to confer largely class rights in the 1980s it was too late.

Class and Mass Action

For Indian political leaders opposed to this colonial discrimination, a similar dilemma existed. A class choice was possible in which they could seek to reach an accommodation between Indian traders and the bourgeois class interests of the colonial power. The alternative was that a more complex struggle could be waged in terms of linking the rights of the traders and indentured labour—a struggle for the rights of people irrespective of their class and by extension therefore irrespective of their race.

It seems to me that Gandhi's particular perceptions and qualities were to play a decisive role here—not only within Indian politics in South Africa—but for the subsequent course of the liberation struggle. To once again quote Nehru commenting on the Indian liberation struggle and Gandhi's influence in Congress:

Gandhi held strong views on economic, social, and other matters. He didn't try to impose all of these on the Congress, though he continued to develop his ideas, and sometimes in the process varied them, through his writings ... In two respects the background of his thought had a vague but considerable influence; the fundamental test of everything was how far it benefitted the masses, and the means were always important and couldn't be ignored even though the end in view was right, for the means governed the end and varied it.

Gandhi was essentially a man of religion, a Hindu to the innermost depths of his being, and yet his conception of religion had nothing to do with any dogma or custom or ritual. It was basically concerned with his firm belief in the moral law, which he calls the law of truth or love. (Nehru, pp. 383–384)

Within this subtle concern for the masses, moral superiority and a readiness to act was the basis for mass mobilisation and action that would permanently influence the course of the struggle and the relation between classes.

Mobilisation for Mass Action

Gandhi's articulation of satyagraha was to shape the South African Indian response to their repression and influence the general

approach to struggle in South Africa. Satyagraha would be applied to the endeavours of any group in society protesting or seeking to establish their rights. However, it is clearly most effective when it takes the form of mass action. So let us first assess under what conditions mass action is most likely to be successful against a brutal and repressive regime.

The first obstacle to overcome is individual and collective fear of the State and its capacity for reprisal. This is a complex process. It requires a depth of feeling amongst a broad spectrum in society and political capacity to neutralise the most brutal excesses of the State. Few, if any, modern States are totally immune from international scrutiny and this limits their excesses to a degree. Excess brutality can in any event inculcate a determination and desperation in the opposition that strengthens it rather than smashing it.

However, in any one protest action there is no guarantee that brutality would not result. To quote a report of Gandhi speaking:

They would notice he had changed his dress from that he had formerly adopted for the last 20 years, and he had decided on the change when he heard of the shooting of their fellow-countrymen. No matter whether the shooting was found to be justified or not, the fact was that they were shot, and those bullets shot him through the heart also. He felt how glorious it would have been if one of those bullets struck him also, because might he not be a murderer himself, by having participated in that event by having advised Indians to strike? His conscience cleared him of this guilt of murder, but he felt he should adopt mourning for those Indians as a humble example to his fellow-countrymen. (Speech at Mass Meeting, Durban, December 21, 1913, Volume 12, Document 200).

It is not enough to unify around a just cause. Gandhi's conduct as a leader lent moral superiority to that cause which allowed it to survive acts of brutality. The problems posed by civil resistance differ substantially from those of military resistance. A guerrilla army is clearly strengthened if its cause establishes moral high ground but we are dealing here with smaller numbers subject to greater levels of resistance. In the case of a conventional army, discipline can be used to keep coherence and determination of purpose. But in mass action it is ordinary people—not all in direct daily contact, not all in common organisation.

For ordinary people to risk death, injury, arrest or victimisation and to do it often is a complex political phenomenon and clearly Gandhi had a supreme understanding of what was necessary and

in what circumstances these energies become a political and socio-economic weapon of struggle.

I learnt only two or three days ago that you had returned from England. Will you allow me to tell you how deeply concerned I was when I learnt that your men were among the first to strike on the coast? At an important meeting, when I was actually asked why I would not advocate a strike on the sugar plantations also, I replied that we were endeavouring to confine the area to the collieries only, in the hope that the strike on the collieries would be a sufficient demonstration to secure relief. (See 3)

He goes on to justify the action by driving for high moral ground:

As you know, in this struggle for honour and self-respect, and for the relief of the distress of my dumb and helpless countrymen, the indentured Indians, it was not possible for us to consider or confine the extent of our sufferings. In this struggle we have not hesitated to invite our own women and children to suffer and lose their all, and we could not very well be expected to consider the interests of individual friends and sympathisers. In all our struggles of this nature the innocent as well as the guilty suffer. I hope, therefore, that neither my countrymen nor I have forfeited the valuable cooperation and sympathy which you have always extended. (See 4)

The need to unify across the lines of class and to establish moral superiority in the eyes of the whole of society are clearly illustrated. Gandhi had to present his case and conduct himself in a manner that a purely working class organisation would find hard to maintain. Very similar problematics arose for Cosatu in the 1980s and 1990s.

Resistance and Negotiation

There is another area of tension within a strategy of mass action. Gandhi saw passive resistance as an instrument toward negotiating from a power base rather than as an instrument of insurrection:

When all the preparations for the march were completed, I made one more effort to achieve a settlement. (See 5)

This tactic is a sophisticated and difficult one. It keeps open the chance of talking, thus establishing the opponent as intransigent and thereby capturing moral ground. But more than this it can in fact lead to negotiation and success. Gandhi was very conscious

of this and was careful to state clear and potentially achievable demands. He understood that successes fuelled the engines of resistance rather than dampened them.

This strategy is not easy since mobilising mass action creates a momentum that makes compromise difficult. Yet precisely because of the mass and largely unorganised nature of such action these energies can also subside quickly the role of leadership is difficult here—it either has to have considerable collective experience, courage and support or a religiosity of purpose around it. Gandhi largely invoked the latter and it is fascinating to watch his relationship with Congress in India—he came to be the embodiment of passive resistance standing apart from Congress leadership.

The Committee [All India Committee] again appealed to Britain and the United Nations ‘in the interest of world freedom’ ... (but) ‘The committee resolves therefore to sanction, for the vindication of India’s undeniable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass struggle on non-violent lines under the inevitable leadership of Gandhiji’. That sanction was to take effect only when Gandhiji so decided. (Nehru, p. 507, reporting on Quit India Resolution 7–8 August 1942)

The difficult choices of timing, negotiating and selling of compromises could be embodied in Gandhi because he had come to occupy an almost religious position whilst remaining a key political actor. Where collective leadership has to make such decisions the position is most difficult for that leadership.

However, even more difficult than negotiating a compromise is the ability to sustain it as a victory. It is necessary to be able to consolidate the gains in real organisational activity. In the absence of this, victories can be all too easily whittled away by the regime once the pressure of mass action has subsided. An ongoing organisational and logistical capacity that can capitalise on the energies unleashed by mass action is an essential requirement for the success and sustainability of mass action. Providing such an organisational capacity is as complex as mass action itself, requiring leadership capabilities that combine mobilising and organising skills. This combination is seldom embodied in one individual—the relationship between Nehru and Gandhi is fascinating in this regard—and even if the capacities reside to different degrees within a leadership grouping it has to act in unison. In the 1990s a large part of Cosatu’s success was to effectively combine these leadership skills and manage the tensions between mobilisation and negotiation.

For the ANC the same dilemmas were to emerge very powerfully in the period after 1990. Despite considerable problems there is no doubt that the existence of organisational and mobilising capacities within the Alliance leadership has been crucial. But there can also be little doubt that the stature of Mandela both nationally and internationally has been crucial in making difficult decisions. It is not too difficult to see the reasoning behind the Indian Congress placing complex negotiating decisions in the hands of Gandhiji when we reflect on our current circumstances.

Alliances

In addition to this leadership role in providing the capacity to harness mass action, a wider organisational issue is raised. How are the differing interests unified in mass action dealt with in the organisational phase? In India the particular nature of Congress merged many interests into an uneasy balance. In South Africa a complex form of Alliance politics emerged. Whether this will make the future process of government more or less effective is difficult to know. However, it opens up an important area of theorising in the South African situation, since mass action is a very complex rather than a simple form of resistance. It also opens more complex potentialities of transforming the resistance into governance. This is an issue on which Gandhi and his influence cannot offer us a great deal because as the embodiment of satyagraha he never had the chance to invoke it in independent India.

In South Africa we are about to enter a crucial phase—that of governance. The Alliance is a more structural phenomenon than was the Indian Congress. The question is whether this can carry over into the process of governance. The Reconstruction and Development programme is essentially a strategy that proposes a form of governance led by the State but involving civil society in policy formation and implementation. This is a strategic response to the magnitude of the socio-economic issues we face and the limitations our history places on the confidence in the organisational abilities of our people. Mass action across our land may have been a crucial contributor to building these capacities.

The more structured relations within the Alliance may also have developed capacities to embrace complex organisational forms that are integral to the process envisaged by the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The forums such as the National Economic Forum, National Housing Forum and others

have been the outcome of mass action and will now be part of governance.

These are very rich areas for further debate, research and theorising. A retrospective look at Gandhi, his philosophy and organisational methods can only be instructive in such an exercise.

Conclusion

We cannot hold Gandhi to account for all that has happened in the struggle for liberation. However, there can be little doubt that his impact was significant. Gandhi raises so many issues within political and historical processes because such complexity seems to condense into one person. His legacy to South Africa is multi-faceted but it will be very interesting to evaluate what impact satyagraha, translated over decades in mass action, will have on our future. Will it be in part of our struggle for liberation and come to end or will it translate into a new form of participative governance?

The need to mobilise mass support for reconstruction and development arises from the extent of the socio-economic problems that apartheid created. New tensions and challenges will emerge between classes and within the Alliance. A concern with altering the socio-economic conditions of the majority of our people—a starting point for Gandhi—will spur us to take on these challenges.

In re-establishing relations—economic, social and political—with the world, the link established between India and South Africa will once again become important. There is a tendency to think of our future economic relations as being with the former colonial powers and the advanced industrial economies. Whilst these relations will continue, it may be that relationships with large economies such as India, China, Brazil and Indonesia may be even more important in our reconstruction and development. One of the goals of this programme is to establish worker rights for all and to eliminate discrimination. If this succeeds then a united working class may be a part of the economy of South Africa as it develops new relations with India. The intricacies and quality of this relationship will have been powerfully influenced by one of the greatest sons of India—Gandhiji. □

7

DEAR MR. GANDHI

Senator Jacques Hébert

You aren't aware of it—not that it matters!—but I've known you a long time. French writer Lanza del Vasto introduced me to you in his book: *Return to the Source*, when I was still a teenager. Brimming with love and faith, this work had strongly influenced my generation.

You probably remember Lanza del Vasto, that tall lanky young man who'd called on you at your ashram in Sevagram, near Warda, in 1937: "I had long been aware," he wrote, "that this saint had discovered, or, rather, rediscovered, a truth that was capable of putting the soul back into life and renewing the world."¹

You'd greeted the young Lanza del Vasto with open arms, no doubt quite moved by the exuberant and profuse admiration he lavished on you. He described the first moments of your encounter as follows:

"Here he is before my eyes, the only man who has shown us a green shoot in the desert of this century.

"A man who knows the hard law of love, hard and clear like a diamond.

"The captain of the unarmed, the father of the pariahs, the king who reigns by the divine right of sainthood.

"He has chosen to show us the power over this earth of absolute innocence. He has come to prove that it can stop machines, hold its own against guns and defy an empire. He has

come into the world to bring us this news from beyond, where nothing changes.”²

This young disciple from Europe loved you profoundly, Mr. Gandhi, and I believe you loved him as well. You gave him a new name: Shantidas, i.e, Servant of Peace. He served you well, he served peace well. To his dying day, he was an ardent disciple of the non-violence you’d practised and preached. A difficult task, since he dealt with Westerners who’d failed to understand the Sermon On the Mount as well as you had, and whose entire culture is steeped in violence.

I met him by chance in Rabat, fifteen years after his visit to Sevagram. I must relate the story, since you’ll likely find it amusing...

In 1952, the Moroccan people’s revolt against French-colonial occupation was brewing. The Istiqlal, not particularly bent on non-violence, was girding its loins. Shortly before leaving Rabat for the Sahara, I read the following ad: “Lanza del Vasto, a disciple of Gandhi, will speak in Morocco.” The Sahara would wait; I couldn’t miss such an opportunity.

The lecture hall is teeming with colonials in their Sunday best. Members of Rabat’s upper crust lord it in the first row. Naturally, most of them sport the Legion of Honour: officers, senior bureaucrats, canons, bishops...

Suddenly, an astonishing man appears on the stage. Wearing sandals and dressed in blue linen, he looks like a prince from another era.

From the outset, his words—which were often yours—chill the audience. Undaunted, he explains your philosophy to these smug nabobs. Before the military, he condemns war and lauds non-violence; before colonial representatives, he rails about India’s revolution, achieved through non-violence; in short, he suggests to the fractious Moroccans the most effective means of banishing their French masters.

“Two people are needed to fight,” says Lanza del Vasto softly. “You have to agree to fight. The assailant needs the victim’s resistance: it’s what he attacks.”

The French colonel presiding over the evening nervously preens his moustache.

The pilgrim of the absolute dressed in blue linen persists: “If I strike your right cheek and you answer in kind, a strife pact is sealed in the twinkling of an eye: let’s have it out! But, if you offer your left cheek and say: ‘you may slap this one as well my

friend: I'll readily suffer this to demonstrate your error,' I'm stunned, anger gives way to astonishment which, in turn, yields to reflection."

Ah! Mr. Gandhi! You'd have been proud of your Shantidas that evening!

Unfortunately, very few Moroccans were in the room. Following the lecture, I approached one of those I knew:

"And so?"

"Well," he answered, "non-violence isn't part of our culture: it's as foreign to us as to the French. And there's no Gandhi in Morocco..."

* * *

At the beginning of my wayfaring youth, I dreamt, like everyone else, of travelling to India, and more specifically to Sevagram, the small village where you settled in 1936, surrounded by your disciples. By the time I made it, in 1950, it had already been two years since you'd fallen under the bullets of a religious fanatic.

You'd chosen Sevagram as the venue for your last ashram, since that poor village was the geographic centre of India, an equal distance from Calcutta, Madras and Delhi.

Your beloved disciple Aryanayakam greeted me in his office, an adobe hut built by you and your friends in 1936: "I welcome you," he said to my friend and me. "You may stay with our large family as long as you please."

That's exactly what you'd said to Lanza del Vasto, thirteen years earlier.

Aryanayakam invites us to sit near him on a mat of braided palm leaves. He offers tea and mandarins and initiates us to the ashram's secrets.

Aryanayakam skillfully manages the basic education centre you created. It's his main occupation, next to replacing you as *bapu* of the ashram, or "little father" as people liked to call you. Your successor is called *baba* which means the same in Bengali.

You'd dreamt of giving India an education system adapted to the masses of poor villagers, of schools that would teach children self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, this is another of your dreams that didn't come true. But here, at least, people still live as you wished all your compatriots should. And so, there are no servants in your ashram, which contains two hundred and fifty people aged seven to sixty years. Each cleans his hut and washes his clothes; every week a new team is given responsibility for preparing the community's meals.

Our first request was to visit the adobe cottage with rickety roof tiles, where you spent the last years of your life. Nothing's changed. In one corner, your thin straw mattress covered with a cotton sheet. I couldn't help imagining you stretched out on this pallet, writing the beautiful letters, the countless articles, treatises and proclamations that made English generals shiver. We can still see the stool that served as your work table, a few of the books you loved (Tolstoy, Thoreau, Ruskin, the Gitagovinda, the Bible), your Brahmanic rosary reminding visitors you were above all a man of God: "Most of the religious men I've met," you'd say, "were politicians in disguise; although I may have the appearance of a politician, I am at the bottom of my heart a man of religion."

A few minor things have changed in Sevagram, but I must reassure you on one point: a strict vegetarian diet is still observed. This evening, seated on the ground in the open air, I ate rice, vegetables and chapattis with members of the community. Following the meal, I joined the line-up at the well where each washed his dishes in a cheerful jangling of copper plates that protested by ringing like bells.

The evening prayer resembles the ones you'd held with your followers, that happy mixture of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Jains and even Christians. As you had wished, each is free to pray the God of his fathers, but all sing in chorus hymns that glorify Vishnu, then Allah and then Christ. And to conclude, striking a skin drum, the reciter chants: *He Ram! He Ram!* Which is to say "Lord! Lord!" your last words before dying.

At the end of my first day at the ashram, I notice I'm shivering feverishly, likely from a relapse of the malaria I'd long ago caught in Central America.

I highlight this inopportune fever, because it allowed me to enjoy the typically Gandhian hospitality that endures in your ashram.

Aryanayakam tells me: "We'll nurse you until you've fully recovered." He leads me to an adobe hut, the mirror image of yours. Aryanayakam introduces me to a young man of my age: "Nana studied medicine for a few years. He will tend you day and night."

I can hardly make out my guardian angel's features: my head spins as I sink into a semi-coma.

After a few days, I notice Nana's presence: a young Hindu with fine and noble features, he's the son of a rich family from Assam. He left behind businesses that enriched his family to join

you in Sevagram, he gave up his beautiful clothes to wear the simple *khadi* costume: a shirt, baggy pants and a cotton vest which he spun and wove himself, according to your teachings.

For twelve days, he nursed me as I'd never been nursed. He prepared my medicine and fruit juice, took my temperature, and gave me sponge baths. He spent hours at my bedside, in case I needed him. He called me *brother*. When I protested his solicitude, he said: "One day, you'll come across a sick person, and you'll nurse him in remembrance of me... Anyhow, what I've done for you, you'd have done for me had I been sick."

Ah! dear Nana, I wish I could be so sure!

I thought you'd like to hear about Nana and Aryanayakam, dear Mr. Gandhi, two disciples who continue to love and honour you.

During my convalescence, I read your wonderful *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, and a collection of your articles, many of them written here. I copied the most entrancing passages on the notebook Nana had given me. For example:

"In the past, when people wanted to fight, they had to measure themselves in terms of physical strength; now it's possible for one man, handling a canon behind a mountain, to destroy thousands of lives. (*Written thirty years before Hiroshima!*)

"What do you think? What needs courage?—Taking pot-shots at people from behind a canon? Or walking towards a canon with a smile and being blown to bits? (*Written nearly eighty years before Tiananmen!*) Who's the real warrior? He who treats war like his best friend, or he who orders the death of others? Believe me, a man without courage can never practise passive resistance."³

What bliss to read you, under "Saint" Nana's sympathetic eye, to relive your first experiences with non-violence in South Africa, which made you, the Indians of Africa and India, and all the earth's downtrodden, discover the unsuspected power of the weak.

You no doubt learned right from your early childhood to respect all living creatures. This is the Jainist *ahimsa*, your family's religion. It's also the *ahimsa* propounded by Buddhism and the Sermon On the Mount.

And you transformed this religiously inspired non-violence into a wonderfully effective political weapon. With infinite faith and immense determination, you gave yourself what appeared an impossible mission at the time: freeing India from its masters without resorting to violence. You conquered a great empire using

only persuasion and the resolve of your followers, who suffered police bludgeons without retaliating, without even fleeing under the blows, and especially without hating their tormentors.

In a world that for centuries resolved conflict among men through violence, you upheld and proved that love always conquers hatred.

Your great non-violent campaigns sapped your adversary's morale, and ultimately gained your country's independence. That of other countries as well, since this tolled the bell for the British Empire, and other colonial empires which had, until then, subjugated a good part of Asia and nearly all of Africa.

You are the total opposite of what Westerners understand to be a nationalist or a sectarian; that's what has always most impressed me about you. Freeing India wasn't only about throwing off British chains; it also meant delivering the country from the injustices of the caste system, and putting religious rivalries to rest once and for all. Wasn't your life's greatest tragedy the partition of India which, with British complicity, created two nations, one Muslim, the other predominantly Hindu?

Today's nationalists, who seek to dismember states for religious, racial or linguistic reasons, are diametrically opposed to your philosophy. With its countless cultures, its myriad religions and sub-religions, its seven hundred and twenty-three main languages and dialects, including fifteen official languages—not counting English—India could have been a paradise for Bosnian-type nationalists, and even those of the Quebec ilk. Thankfully, your alleged “nationalism” was of another kind... “I have never heard any patriotic talk from Gandhiji or his followers,” wrote Lanza del Vasto. “Good manners which I appreciate.”⁴

The world is relentlessly rocked by violent conflicts; one of its lingering mysteries is the scarcity of devotees to non-violence. Would the horrors of Bosnia, a very Christian and very Muslim land, convince us that only India can produce a mahatma, that there never will be a Serbian or Croatian “great soul”?

Many have upheld that your *satyagraha*⁵ could only work in India, and only because you were its leader. The proof: since your death, bouts of violence regularly disrupt your beloved country.

And yet, you know it well, you've written it a hundred times, non-violence can succeed wherever there are men of good will. And we can't deny it helped Martin Luther King Jr., who wrote: “The whole Gandhian concept of *satyagraha* was profoundly significant for me. As I delved deeper into the philosophy of

Gandhi, my scepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time that the Christian doctrine of love, operating through the Gandhian method of non-violence, is one of the most potent weapons available to an oppressed people in its struggle for freedom." He added, "If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable."⁶

Events in Bosnia, and the violence raging throughout the former Soviet empire and elsewhere in the world, shouldn't make us overlook the exemplary passive resistance of Czechoslovakians before the brutal Russian invasion in 1968, or the courageous undertakings of Lech Walesa, whose organized strikes triggered the rapid demise of Poland's communist dictatorship. "The only way we can oppose violence," Walesa had said, "is by declining to use it... We have no weapons, save truth and faith." It's as though we were hearing you, dear Mr. Gandhi...

Walesa, Czechoslovakia, Martin Luther King Jr., the 1986 civil-disobedience campaign in the Philippines, and numerous less spectacular examples of non-violence in South Africa and Latin America, attest to the relevance of your *satyagraha*...

You'd maintained this as early as 1925:

"I can say without arrogance, and in all humility, that my message and methods are in essence meant for the entire world."

The world thanks you, dear Mr. Gandhi!

□

Notes & References

1. *Return of the Source*, New York, Touchstone Books (Simon and Schuster), 1971, p. 40.
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3. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, in *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, X, pp. 51-52.
4. *Return to the Source*, p. 125.
5. "The Gandhian method of achieving social and political reform by means of tolerance and active goodwill coupled with a firmness in one's cause expressed through non-violent passive resistance and non-cooperation." (*Webster's Third International Dictionary of the English Language*, G.C. Merriam & Co., 1976.)
6. Martin Luther King Jr., *The Strength to Love*, New York, Harper & Row, 1963.

8

THE MAKING OF THE MAHATMA: THE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

Fatima Meer

The young Gandhi, aged 19, who left the shores of his country in 1888 to study in London, was not the Gandhi who left South Africa in July 1914. It was a sensuous young boy who left his homeland, an ascetic who left the shores of South Africa. The boy became an English gentleman in London, worldly, but restrained by the vows he had made to his mother to abstain from wine, meat and women, and by his straitened financial situation. His presence in London was not prompted by any great burning desire for learning, but, as he wrote in his diary, "...I had a secret design in my mind of coming here to satisfy my curiosity of knowing what London was." (November 12, 1888).

London sophisticated Gandhi and converted him from the boy from Bhavnagar to a man of the world. It also cultivated in him a strong sense of Britishness, which persisted throughout the major part of his stay in South Africa despite episodes of searing disillusion. London didn't challenge him; not in the way South Africa later did: he lived in a sort of comfortable somnambulism there, taking in everything he experienced, as good and wholesome.

He joined the Vegetarian Society, became an associate member of the Blavatsky Theosophical Lodge, gained some insight

into Hinduism, and read the *Bhagavad Gita* for the first time. The impact was similar to that of many colonised Asians who discover their culture through the eyes of their orientalist colonisers and develop a patronising attitude to it.

On his return to India, Gandhi could barely tolerate his home and was happy to take up a job offer abroad. He arrived in South Africa in 1893. He was twenty-three years old.

Within a fortnight, the foundation was laid for the Mahatma. He collided head-on with racism—he was ordered to take off his turban in court, kicked out of a first class compartment, left stranded on the railway station at Pietermaritzburg, refused a seat in the coach on his onward journey to Johannesburg, cuffed and kicked when he insisted on having one, and was refused a room in a hotel. Having suffered so much humiliation, his first impulse was to flee the country which so degraded men of colour; but then his intrinsic nature came to the fore: his integrity, dependability, firmness of resolve, commitment to truth; qualities derived from his native Kathiawad, in his family, from his father, and above all, from his mother. These overpowered him with a sense of mission; and he stayed, not only to redeem his dignity, but that of the entire Indian people and as it happened, to pave the way for the liberation of the colonised mind the world over.

Any number of London-returned young Indian men could have come to South Africa and fumed at the racial insults: only a potential Mahatma could have transformed them into a moral weapon to impel moral change.

Gandhi's first year in South Africa was spent in Pretoria, and he observed:

The year's stay in Pretoria was a most valuable experience in my life. Here it was that I had opportunities of learning public work and acquired some measure of my capacity for it. Here it was that the religious spirit within me became a living force and here too, I acquired a true knowledge of legal practice ...and gained confidence that I should not, after all, fail as a lawyer. (*Ahimsa*, p. 109).

His public work was in the Indian community segregated in the Asiatic Bazaar. He got to know the members personally, held regular meetings with them, gave classes in English, made representations on their behalf to the authorities, and wrote letters to the press to expose the racial injustices they suffered. That he had come to place the community ahead of the self was reflected in his resolve not to react personally to racial attacks. Thus when

kicked off the pavement outside President Kruger's house, he declined a white friend's offer to bear witness against the offending policeman, saying, "I have made it a rule not to go to court in respect of any personal grievance."

His practice of law was confined to the case for which he had been engaged. He learnt more law preparing that brief than he had at the Innes of Court; more important, he learnt the morality of law when he succeeded in settling the dispute between the two litigants out of court.

My joy was boundless. I had learnt the true practice of law. I had learnt to find out the better side of human nature and to enter men's hearts. I realised that the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder. The lesson was so indelibly burnt into me that a large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases. I lost nothing thereby, not even money, certainly not my soul.

Gandhi's religious intellectualism began in London with his exposure to theosophy, which laid the basis for a broad and tolerant view of the world's religions. In Pretoria, he was confronted with Christian certitude. The young Hindu's confession that he was not as yet committed to any particular religion, inspired his Christian associates to set about saving his soul, but Gandhi shied away from that. He rejected the notion that he could go to heaven only through Christianity, or that Jesus was the only incarnate son of God. He later identified these claims with the arrogance of imperialism. He questioned the claim of any religion to be the most perfect or the greatest. "What was the meaning of saying the Vedas were the inspired Word of God? If they were inspired, why not also the Bible or the Quran?" He came to see all religions as directed to the single Absolute, to Truth and subscribing to the absolute moral law, *dharma*, though differently, according to cultural and aptitudinal differences.

II

Gandhi had intended to spend no more than a year in South Africa, to fulfill his contract and return to India. That he decided so readily to remain beyond that year, is indicative of his sense of calling. He had experienced that sense in Pietermaritzburg when he had been thrown off the train. It came to him again on the eve of his departure in 1894, when at a farewell party he read

in the papers the publication of a new Bill to disenfranchise blacks.

He saw this as the final nail in the Indian coffin and urged his compatriots to fight the Bill. They promptly asked him to stay on and help them do so, and he did. The ease with which he changed directions then, signalled the freedom of the Mahatma which would come later, unconstrained by any force, apart from his own inner moral prompting.

The Natal Franchise Bill was Gandhi's introduction to political activism. It provided him with the opportunity to learn political skills and mobilise people into united action. Later he would give such unity a deeply moral base, in God Himself: In 1894, he based it on the common claims of Indian and English to British citizenship.

While Gandhi was new to politics, the Muslim traders who constituted his immediate supporters were not novices. They had formed an organisation in 1891 to defend their trading rights; and the rights of indentured labourers. With Gandhi as the first honorary secretary, they now formed the Natal Indian Congress, (NIC) with a broader base and drawing together traders and workers and all linguistic communities in common cause. They drafted letters to the parliamentarians, drew up memorials and collected signatures. A monster petition bearing 10000 signatures was sent to the Secretary of State for Colonies in Britain by the Natal Indian Congress. Within months, Natal Indians, who had lived in relative anonymity, impressed themselves on the Imperial conscience.

The NIC developed into a political-cum-educational-cum-service organisation, informing and educating its members and developing their skills in public speaking, conducting meetings and keeping records. It was probably the first modern political movement against colonialism.

The work, the responsibility, the ready and adulating support, the friendship and warmth that comes from a close-knit community, facilitated Gandhi's organisational success. At the same time, the multi-lingual, multi-caste, multi-class and multi-religious nature of the Indian people laid the basis for his distinctive social pluralism and his unqualified protection of minority rights which earned him his martyrdom.

In 1894, Gandhi was the only member of the Natal Indian Congress who could draw up the necessary documents and make skilled oral representations. Later in the Transvaal, he established the British Indian Association and extended like service to that organisation. The experience cultivated his writing and speaking skills and prepared him for the vast audiences in the Indian sub-

continent he would have to address, to resist the British. It was also during this early period that he developed his own unique lobbying technique, first applied in Natal and directed to members of the Legislative Assembly, and later in London, during his two trips on behalf of the Indian people. Gandhi was, in the modern phrase, a “workaholic”. He worked round the clock taking only as much sleep and rest as he required. The pattern was set in South Africa. It is reflected in the following letter to Kallenbach written from London: “I am working under greater pressure than in Johannesburg. Except for one night, I have not gone to bed before one o’clock. At times, I have sat up till 3.30 in the morning and I do not know when I shall retire tonight. It is now 10.15.” (Hotel Cecil, November 2, 1906).

Gandhi classifies societies into *dharmic* (good) and *a-dharmic* (bad). He had regarded the British Empire, the British Constitution, the British culture and civilisation as *dharmic*. In South Africa, he confronted a blatantly *a-dharmic* society, and yet it was British. His first reaction was that the white colonialists, estranged from their roots had forgotten them and needed reminding. When he returned in 1896, after a six-month leave in India, and was confronted with the ugly violence of the Europeans, mobilised to drive the Indians on board the two ships into the sea, he came to realise traumatically, that western civilisation as a whole was *a-dharmic*; it was built on violence.

Gandhi’s disillusionment with western culture, beginning with the *Courland-Naderi* experience, strengthened with time. In 1897, he had the responsibility of educating his nephew Gokuldas (10) and his two sons 9 and 5 respectively. He refused to send them to the Indian schools, run by missionaries where the medium of instruction was English, where they would be subjected to colonial education which would alienate them from their own culture, and demean it in their tender minds. Later he set up his own schools in South Africa at Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm, where the emphasis was on character building, on cultivating a desire for knowledge, love for manual labour and identification with one’s own culture. In India, in the fullness of Indian resistance against the British, he would develop it into the call for *swadeshi*, the use of one’s own, and the boycott of British goods, which had deprived the people of their skills and their capital. He would say:

Indian villages produced and supplied to the Indian towns and cities all their wants. India became impoverished when our cities became foreign markets and began to drain the villages dry by

dumping cheap and shoddy goods from foreign lands. (Sarvodaya, p. 43).

The significance of Gandhi is that he does not simply reject, he replaces what he considers bad with its opposite. He repudiates the coloniser and resurrects the colonised in his own idiom, his own language, his own religion, his own culture, on his own terms, on his own soil.

He did not restrict swadeshi to material goods: there was the swadeshi of ideas:

Let us not be obsessed with catchwords and seductive slogans imported from the West. Have we not our distinct and Eastern tradition? Are we not capable of finding our own solution to the question of capital and labour? All that comes from the West on this subject is tarred with the brush of violence. (Sarvodaya, p. 91).

He predated Frans Fanon and the Black Consciousness movement by more than a century in thought. Unlike most of them, he transcribed his thoughts into reality in encouraging the resurgence of the Indians. Khoemeni comes closest to Gandhi in resurrecting the indigenous intellect and the indigenous spirit; both worked within the religious base: Gandhi's socialism is essentially a distillation of the essence of Hinduism, Khoemeni's of Islam.

III

As the new century dawned, there appeared to be little left for Gandhi to do in the colony of Natal. He had settled down to a lucrative legal practice, enjoyed the life of an affluent householder, become a full participant in the community's social life, raised funds for worthy causes, dispensed medicines at the local Mission Hospital, defended indentured Indian labourers protected trading Indians, and served the British in the Anglo-Boer War. He had spent seven years in the colony of Natal and it seemed time to go home and settle permanently in India. He left with his family in 1901, but not without a sense of unfinished business. He was restless in India, spent most of his time canvassing the South African cause; he wrote to friends in Durban that if he was needed, they should call him before he settled down in Bombay. Within fifteen months of his departure, he received a telegram asking him to return urgently.

The position of Indians had deteriorated dramatically in the

Transvaal since the British had taken control of Kruger's Republic. A Department of Asiatic Affairs had been set up for the main purpose, it seemed, to harass Indian refugees returning to the homes and businesses they had temporarily vacated during the war. The British Assistant Colonial Secretary was due in the country and Gandhi was required to draw up the memorials and lead the deputations, in the hope of wringing some relief.

Gandhi had expected to complete his work in one or two years and return to Bombay. He found the position far worse than he had expected. He stayed twelve more years in the country, and these proved to be the most seminal in his life, for these were the years in which he formulated concepts of satyagraha, sarvodaya and ahimsa, and the concept of trusteeship in the relations between capital and labour.

In the first few years, he waged a relentless battle against the Asiatic Department, and the Johannesburg Town Council, both bent on depriving Indians of the few rights they had possessed in the Boer Republic. He set up contacts with the Chinese community, equally affected with the Indians as Asians, strengthened the British Indian Association, and realising the importance of a newspaper in mobilising the community against the oppressor, established the *Indian Opinion*, published in English and in several Indian languages. The paper ran at a loss and he had to subsidise it heavily from revenue earned in his legal practice. This marked his first step towards the renunciation of personal wealth and using it on behalf of the community.

In 1904 plague broke out in the "coolie location" in Johannesburg. Gandhi had seen it coming and had repeatedly warned the authorities, but without avail. The outbreak was directly due to the greed and neglect of the town council which had expropriated the private stands, converted the former owners into tenants, and then aggravated the already existing overcrowding by bringing in more tenants to earn more rental: at the same time, it criminally neglected crucial sanitary services. When plague broke out, the Council did little to help and the Indian people were left practically to themselves to cope with the problems. They improvised a hospital and took over the nursing, very much under Gandhi's direction, who worked day and night and rarely moved away from the patients. The experience confirmed his already strongly developed sense of public hygiene, sanitation and the need for adequate ventilation.

Predominant among the many crusades he would launch in

India, would be the crusade against unhygienic living conditions in the villages and *bastis*.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Gandhi's mind turned more and more towards ideas of renunciation. His passage to the ethic of non-possession was evident in his return of the costly gifts presented to him on his departure to India; he had them placed in trust for use by the community.

In 1895, Gandhi had visited the Trappist Monastery at Marianhill near Durban and had been highly impressed with their communal living. In setting up his own home, he had invited his clerks and friends to live with him. His lifestyle, beginning with an air of affluence, simplified as time went. As his study of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* deepened, so he became more and more convinced that he should reduce his material needs to the bare minimum. His reading of Ruskin and Tolstoy confirmed him in his quest for an alternate society, alternate to the capitalist and the emerging communist. He identified that society as *sarvodaya*. At Phoenix and Tolstoy, he began his first experiments in *sarvodaya*—a society based on social equality, though recognising differential aptitudes and talents, but rewarding each equally; a society in which Truth is the goal and selfless service the means; an intrinsically Indian form of socialism, self-contained and self-sufficient, based on *ahimsa* or non-violence.

IV

India produced many ascetics in Gandhi's time yet only he is the Mahatma; when we speak of Mahatma, we mean only Gandhi. This exceptional status attributed to him is due to the fact that he combined in himself the political and the ascetic. He was a political ascetic, who brought asceticism to politics, sacralizing it and converting it from a quest for power into a quest for truth, justice for the downtrodden and the poor and a means of personal and societal liberation. His political process is, incongruously a moral force, *satyagraha*, discovered and perfected in South Africa, to win civil liberties.

Gandhi's personal preparation for *satyagraha* occurred on the war plain of the so-called Zulu Rebellion. Gandhi, still a loyal British subject, once more answered the call of "king and country". But he soon realised that he was on the wrong side, that this was no rebellion but stark repression, that justice was on the side of the Zulus who were treated with inhumanity for doing no more

than resisting a poll tax similar to that imposed on the Indians. The Indian stretcher-bearers redeemed themselves by nursing the Zulu prisoners of war abandoned by the British. For Gandhi, the brutality against the Zulus roused his soul against violence as nothing had been done up to then; he sought answers and found them in his traditional scriptures. He returned from the war determined to give himself wholly to serving the people. He took the vow of celibacy (*bramacharya*), and thereby impressed his detachment from material pleasures and possessions.

As if to test his new resolve, the Transvaal British Government moved the most pernicious Bill yet against Asians. It violated their integrity, attacked their dignity and threatened their domicile rights. Three thousand Indians gathered at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg in September 1906 and swore in the name of God to resist the Act to death. Gandhi was deeply moved by the intensely religious atmosphere that charged the hall. He sought a name for the kind of resistance suggested and came up with *satyagraha*, or the struggle for truth.

Satyagraha is not passive resistance, it is profoundly active; it is the mustering of the ultimate human power, that of the soul against the evils of tyranny.

While the oath to resist was taken in 1906, *satyagraha* was launched a whole year later only after all attempts at persuading the government to drop the Bill, failed. The Indians defied the Bill when it became law and the gaols filled, with Gandhi among the prisoners. It proved too much for the Government and within a fortnight, General Smuts made overtures for a settlement, offering to withdraw the Act if Indians and Chinese registered voluntarily. Gandhi agreed and the *satyagrahis* were released.

But while Gandhi trusted Smuts, there were those among his followers who did not, and seeing how diligently Gandhi went about mobilising Indians to register voluntarily for passes, one or two of these, assaulted him. They proved to be right. Smuts did not keep his promise. The law was passed, and *satyagraha* was resumed with his assailants joining in. The incident impressed its own moral and political lessons. The struggle continued for seven years. The South African government promised Gopal Krishna Gokhale during his visit to South Africa, in 1912 that it would repeal the poll tax, but did not: instead it exacerbated the Indians' situation by declaring all marriages contracted according to Hindu and Muslim rites, illegal thereby throwing into jeopardy, the domicile rights of wives and children. All these issues became the

object of satyagraha. The women and workers joined the struggle, which was resumed in 1913 with Gandhi's wife Kasturba leading the first batch with her sons.

Four thousand coal-miners came out on strike and Gandhi led them in an epic march across the Natal border into the Transvaal, thereby breaching the crucial anti-Asiatic law. Thousands were arrested, Gandhi and practically his whole family, among them. By 1913, there were more than 8,000 Indian workers on strike. The police and army were brought out to force them back to work, and there were shootings. Hundreds were wounded, many were shot dead. Gandhi learnt that non-violence is shot with violence, that the path to Truth is not without bloodshed.

Gandhi was imprisoned in South Africa on four occasions, placed in solitary confinement during one, and marched handcuffed in prison garb in public on two occasions. He was also physically maltreated. His fellow resisters fared as badly or worse; but the resistance continued couragelessly and drew world-wide attention, ultimately forcing the South African Government to release all political prisoners and passing the Indian Relief Act.

By then Gandhi had given up his legal practice, parted with all his material possessions and taken up to living with *satyagrahis* at Tolstoy Farm. On release from his last term of imprisonment, he set aside his European clothes and adopted the garb of the peasant. He was ready for his work in India. His apprenticeship in South Africa had ended.

The South African experience perfected the principles of satyagraha and prepared Gandhi for the far more massive and relentless struggle in India. Identifying satyagraha as civil resistance, Gandhi said:

It is a most powerful expression of a soul's anguish and an eloquent protest against the continuance of an evil state. An out and out civil resister simply ignores the authority of the state—disregards every immoral state law, refuses to pay taxes, disobeys laws, but he never uses force and never resists force when it is used against him. He invites imprisonment because he finds the bodily freedom he seemingly enjoys, to be an intolerable burden. He argues to himself that a State allows personal freedom only in so far as the citizen submits to its regulations. It is the price paid for personal liberty. (*Sarvodaya*, p. 108).

While ahimsa or non-violence is intrinsic to satyagraha, it does not rule out violence under every circumstance. Gandhi considered cowardice to be more reprehensible than violence, and

this needs to be emphasised, for the non-violence of satyagraha is often misconstrued.

My creed of non-violence is an exhilarating active force. It has no room for cowardice or even weakness. There is hope for a violent man to be some day non-violent, but there is none for a coward.

There are two ways of defence. The best and the most effective is not to defend at all, but to remain at one's post, risking every danger. The next best, but equally honourable method is to strike bravely in self-defence and put one's life in the most dangerous positions.

I do believe that where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour. (Sarvodaya, p. 3).

V

There were three classes of Indians in Gandhi's South Africa—the traders, mostly Muslim, with their clerks and shop assistants, the ex-indentured Indians who had made good as clerks, teachers and court interpreters, and the great body of indentured labourers. Gandhi began working with the first two groups almost immediately on his arrival. He came into contact with the third within months of establishing his office in the person of Balasundram. Balasundram came to see him, bleeding and bedraggled, his self-presence and dignity in shambles. He had been battered by his master. It was Gandhi's first encounter with a "slave", and it left him shattered. He had Balasundram transferred to a relatively humane master: thereafter his office became an open house to any indentured Indian who sought his assistance. More important, he took up the cause of the indentured Indian labourer and through the Natal Indian Congress tried to bring what relief he could. In a bid to prevent the indentured labourer ever becoming free, the Natal Government imposed a head tax of £ 25 on every Indian, twelve years and over, who did not re-indenture or submit to repatriation. Gandhi pleaded: "The indentured Indian is practically helpless. He comes from India in order to avoid starvation. He breaks asunder all ties, and becomes domiciled in Natal. To a starving man, there is practically no home. His home is where he can keep body and soul together. The associations he forms in Natal among his own class are to him the first real friends and acquaintances, and to expect him to break that home is nothing short of cruelty."

(17.9.1903) The tax was reduced to £ 3 largely through his efforts and that of the Natal Indian Congress. The call for the abolition of the poll tax became the focal issue in the last phase of Gandhi's satyagraha in South Africa. He appealed:

Hundreds of Indians find themselves in prison. Are we not to blame for all this? Had we taken more pains than we did, these people would have been free from the yoke which they bore for 15 years. We did not hear the cry for help at our own doors! Who can tell how much of such burden (or guilt) we have to bear. It is enjoined by all religions that we should share in the suffering that we see around us. We have failed to do so. (24-9-1913)

He simultaneously called on Indians "to agitate on a big scale, to adopt satyagraha, if necessary, and bring the system of indenture to an end," and in 1913, did just that. (*Indian Opinion*, 3-10-1908).

His protest against brutal and exploitative labour laws was not confined to Indians; he exposed the savage floggings suffered daily by Chinese labourers on the mines, and criticised the Durban municipality for reducing the wages of Indian and African workers.

Poverty

Gandhi became acutely aware in South Africa that human resources were limited and there was a moral obligation on those with more to share with those with less, that the rich could only become rich by exploiting the poor. Exploitation was violence. He exposed the fallacy of the myth that everyone could enjoy a high standard of living, that all one had to do to succeed was to work hard. He knew thousands worked themselves to the bone and still remained hungry. The gospel he preached was the gospel of levelling down, of emulating the *kisan* (peasant), not the zamindar (landlord), for all could be *kisans*, but only a few could be zamindars.

God never stores for the morrow. The rich have a superfluous store of things which they do not need, and which are therefore neglected and wasted, while millions are starved to death for want of subsistence. If each retained possession only of what is needed, no one would be in want, and all would live in contentment.

Gandhi did not just theorize; he offered himself as the supreme example or guinea-pig in implementing his theory. He climbed down from his upper middle class existence to the level of the *kisan*.

We must first come in living touch with them (the masses) by working for them and in their midst. We must share their sorrows, understand their difficulties and anticipate their wants. With the Pariahs, we must be Pariahs and see how we feel to clean the closets of the upper classes and have the remains of their table thrown at us.

We must see how we like being in the boxes, miscalled houses of the labourers of Bombay. We must identify ourselves with the villagers who toil under the hot sun beating on their bent backs and see how we would like to drink water from the pool in which the villagers bathe, wash their clothes and pots and in which their cattle drink and roll. Then and not till then, shall we truly represent the masses and they will, as surely as I am writing this, respond to every call. (*Young India*, 11-09-1924).

From his understanding of wealth and poverty, came his understanding of labour and capital and led him to the solution of trusteeship. Phoenix was his first experiment in trusteeship. By purchasing the land, he became a landowner, but then he distributed the land to all those who settled on it, and became a trustee with equal rights to the land and its resources as the other settlers or working partners.

Later he said to the Zamindars of India,

You may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare. I have told mill owners that they are not exclusive owners of mills and workmen are equal sharers in ownership. In the same way, I would tell you that ownership of your land belongs as much to the ryots as to you. (*Sarvodaya*, p. 50).

Gandhi saw an interdependent relation between capital and labour.

The idea is to take from capital labour's due and no more, and this, not by paralyzing capital, but by reform among labourers from within and by their own self consciousness; not again through the cleverness and maneuvering of non-labour leaders, but by educating labour to evolve its own leadership and to own self-reliant, self-existing organisation. (*Sarvodaya*)

He viewed the life of the peasant preferable to that of the industrial worker. He saw the *kisan* "as the salt of the earth which rightly belongs to him", and saw the industrial worker, concentrated and centralised, more limited in scope and more vulnerable to political handling. The aim "of workers should be to raise the moral and intellectual height of labour and thus by sheer merit,

to make him or her capable not merely of bettering his or her material condition, but making labour master of the means of production instead of being the slave that it is."

He rejected the Marxist thesis of an unresolvable conflict between capital and labour, for that dictated violence.

I am for the establishment of right relations between capital and labour. I do not wish for the supremacy of the one over the other. I do not think there is any natural antagonism between them. (*Young India*, 8–25)

Our socialism or communism should be based on non-violence and on harmonious co-operation of labour and capital, landlord and tenant. (*Sarvodaya*, p. 90)

With the collapse of socialism in Russia, and with China amending her social system with a strong dose of free enterprise, Gandhi's alternate society, *sarvodaya* is a serious option.

Both capitalism and communism have led to totalitarianism, with the disappearance of the individual in the masses and the representation of the mass by the bureaucracy. To return humanity to itself, society needs to be restructured on the basis of the small module, and centred in the individual rather than in the bureaucracy that represents that individual dehumanised into the mass. Government needs to be built down, distributed and liberated, not held captive in the few who represent the many, however, as has happened in so many capitalist and socialist democracies.

At a time when Freud was liberating sex, Gandhi was reining it in; when Marx was pitting worker against capitalist, Gandhi was reconciling them; when the dominant European thought had dropped God and soul out of social reckoning, he was centralising society in God and soul; above all, at a time when the colonised world had ceased to think, he dared to think, when it had ceased to control, he dared to control, and when the ideologies of the colonised had been virtually killed, he resuscitated the indigenous Indian ideology and empowered it with a potency that liberated and redeemed.

Gandhi left South Africa on July 18, 1914. The Indian Relief Act did not solve the problems of Indians. Their persecutions continued and worsened. The end of Second World War saw further discrimination against them and the fourth and last Indian passive resistance was waged in 1946 under Doctors Naicker and Dadoo. This was followed in 1952 by the "Defiance of Unjust Laws" against the apartheid government, waged jointly by the Indian and African Congresses. Full citizen rights for all South Africans, including Indians, is part of the new dispensation. □

TRIBUTE TO MAHATMA GANDHI*

Bishop Peter Storey

Dr. Mandela, Dr. Karan Singh, our generous hosts of the South African Indian Community, ladies and gentlemen:

I count it a unique privilege to celebrate with you tonight and to be permitted to pay my humble tribute to the Mahatma on behalf of the wider religious community in our land. As a representative of the Christian Church, I confess with shame that one of Gandhi's first encounters with racism in South Africa was when he was ejected from a church in Durban because of the colour of his skin. But I also celebrate this opportunity because of his influence on my own journey to non-violence and I remember that as one of my sons was preparing himself for prison after refusing military service in the SADF, a picture of the Mahatma hanging in his room was one of his great inspirations.

Every so often God gives to humanity a gift in the form of one man or woman of such gigantic moral and spiritual stature that all of us are reminded of our own divine origin and infinite potential. Mahatma Gandhi was such a gift. His life and teaching transcend the boundaries of religion and nationality, offering an equally compelling challenge to us all. His spirit touches all that is noblest in all who are human and when we look upon this man we are both proud to be part of the human race and ashamed to be such poor representatives of it.

* On 28 May 1993, at a meeting held in Johannesburg City Hall to observe the hundredth anniversary of Gandhi's arrival in South Africa.

I speak tonight as a Christian, wishing that I could be as truly Christ-like as this Hindu. I speak as a South African, grateful that this land known for so much evil, was the cradle of satyagraha—the overcoming of evil with good—and that a place of such darkness gave birth to such light. It is one of the ironies of history that the world's largest democracy had its genesis in a land still struggling to be free. It is an even more tragic irony that in the land where the moral force of non-violence won its first small victories, the dark powers of violence threaten to destroy us all.

In marking this Anniversary we need to ask what lessons we can learn from the Mahatma that may be applicable in the here and now. I will try to offer some thoughts on 'The Gandhian Experience: it's relevance in present-day South Africa'.

The first lesson is that it takes more strength to make peace than to wage war.

Gandhi, the non-violent one, never underestimated the courage of the warrior: he said time and again that unless people had the courage to fight for their freedom they would never have the strength for non-violence. He said 'nothing can be done with a coward, but a violent person can become a non-violent one'. Gandhi understood why Jesus said, not: 'blessed are the peace-lovers', but 'blessed are the peace-makers'.

The Mahatma knew that if there was a higher, costlier courage than that of the warrior, it was that of the peacemaker. Gandhi's life calls us to that higher courage and that greater cost. In this call he is joined by great souls of every major religion: the Muslim Badshah Khan (Abdul Gaffar Khan), the Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh and the Christian Martin Luther King are among them.

In the South Africa of 1993, we are finding that it is easier to wage war than to make peace. Terrible violence is still being used to resist freedom and weapons once dedicated to liberation are now turned to evil purposes.

In the South Africa of 1993, the time of the peacemaker has come. Unless we are willing to invest even more courage and commitment into training people for peace than was given to training for war, the victory over Apartheid will be a hollow one, marked by the weeping of widows and the cries of orphaned children.

We need above all, to win our white and black youth, who have been militarised and traumatised into the belief that guns mean power, to the discovery that it takes far more inner courage to and nobility to reach out hands to the enemy, to bind up the

broken and heal the hurting, than it does to pull a trigger.

The second challenge from the Mahatma is to guard the moral and spiritual base of our struggle.

I smile when I see old photographs of Gandhi with the powerful politicians of his day: Churchill, Mountbatten, Nehru, Patel and Jinnah. There is something almost comical about this 'naked fakir', as Churchill called him, clad only in a loincloth and supported by a stick, amongst these smooth and urbane power-brokers.

But those pictures tell an important story: every one of those politicians, whether friend or foe, stood in awe of this little man. He brought no armies to the negotiating table, but he came with a moral power which they ignored at their peril. He was a wily politician, but he was more: the deep spiritual truths in his heart gave his life a consistency and integrity which were to confound General Smuts in South Africa and the might of the British Raj in India.

Gandhi was also that unique kind of leader who was as willing to challenge his own followers as he was to defy the enemy. Even while he led the great campaigns against the British, he told Hindu and Muslim alike that before they could think of freedom they had to be brave enough to love and trust and tolerate one another. As he moved among the powerful he reminded them always that they were the servants of the 'Harijans'—the untouchables.

In the South Africa of 1993 we stand in desperate need of a new moral and spiritual force that will give shape to our future. God gave to the people of this land amazing strength to survive and resist bondage. What we need now is the humility and integrity to handle freedom. We are learning every day that you can't build a new South Africa on old South Africans and that unless a powerful new spirit penetrates the hearts of us all, our best efforts will fall short. This spirit must come from God; it has no other source.

The third challenge from the Mahatma is to seek more than the defeat of the enemy—it is to make enemies into friends.

Gandhi had that remarkable conviction that those who opposed him were not so much enemies, as friends yet to be made. You remember how he made a pair of sandals for General Smuts while he was in prison here. The General returned them to Gandhi on the Mahatma's seventieth birthday in 1939. Smuts wrote: 'I have worn these sandals for many a summer, even though I may feel I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man. It was my fate to be the antagonist of one for whom

I have the utmost respect'.

Gandhi's commitment to non-violence was based in the knowledge that at the end of the day, those who had opposed one another would have to live together—and violent conflict left behind it a legacy of such bitterness that this would be so much more difficult. So, even when locked in conflict, Gandhi refused to hate. And the miracle of it was that hundreds of thousands, if not millions of his followers did the same.

Gandhi practised a politics whose time has come in South Africa: the politics of tolerance and forgiveness. I remember Percy Qoboza's words more than a decade ago: 'If we have a blood-bath in South Africa, what will we have when it is all over? We will have a majority of blacks and a minority of whites who will have to learn to live peacefully with each other'. Those words make eminent sense to me and they represent a powerful reason to end the violence before that blood-bath comes. In South Africa the task may seem impossible because there is so much to be forgiven, but we have no choice: the end of the road for us must be reconciliation.

Gandhi taught that, without compromising the truth, the way you stand for the right can win over those who stand for the wrong. We have entered that chapter in our history when this must be the noble task of all who have struggled for freedom.

We come here to salute a saint who saw beyond his time into God's future for the human race. Gandhi knew beyond all doubt that God's dream for humanity is a world of peace, a world where all are brothers and sisters and none practise war anymore. His greatness lies in the fact that he not only saw God's future, but that he was willing to live God's future in the here and now.

That is the Mahatma's challenge to the South Africa of 1993: in this land where he began his work, we are called to complete it.

□

THE GANDHI HOUSE

Judith Watt

Ask any resident of Johannesburg's oldest suburb where to find Gandhi's house and 10 to one, they'll point you in the direction of number 19 Albemarle Street, Troyeville. As you wind down the small streets, you'll come across a three-storeyed house, curiously out of place among the semis that characterise the suburb.

Once the home of the Mahatma, this magical house is now the home of architect Michael Hart, his wife Skye and their children Natasha and Rodin. Restoring it to its former glory has been an act of love; as former fashion editor Skye comments, "You have to have a very good marriage and lots of dedication to survive what we've been through."

Skye believes it was fate that brought her to the house back in 1991. She was searching for a repair shop for her broken Philippe Starck lemon squeezer when she came across the dilapidated house, which had stood vacant for 10 months. For Skye it was love at first sight, and she took Michael to see it. Despite the fact that it had been a boarding house and was mutilated, Michael immediately recognised its historic architectural value. They convinced the owner, who recognised the house's importance, that they were the right people to buy it. "We had a vision for the house—and he realised that we had the capability to put it together."

They'd heard the rumour that it had been Gandhi's house and wanted to prove that he really had lived there. Delving into

the Archives, Michael compiled history of the house. "What is so wonderful about it is that it is a perfect example of European Art Nouveau in South Africa, built when the standard was Victorian colonial," he enthuses.

The house dates back to 1905, designed by and built for the Swiss architect Eugene Metzler, and has the same voluptuous curvilinear lines of its European counterparts such as the Café Biedermeier in Germany. One can imagine ladies descending the curling staircase in tea gowns, and children leaning over the bow-fronted balconies chattering to friends.

How long Metzler lived there is uncertain, but Michael has proved that Gandhi lived there between 1905 and 1914. It was found for him by a Chinese agent called Mr Sing. At that time, Troyeville was a whites-only area, so Gandhi, his wife Kasturbai and three children shared the eight-roomed house with a colleague, an attorney called Henry Polak.

There are stories of Gandhi praying every morning on the east-facing balcony, and Michael has discovered a letter from Gandhi to Count Leo Tolstoy, giving the Albemarle Street address. "We want to make the house a national monument because of Gandhi. We have already celebrated his birthday here with his grandson." Today, the physical remains of Gandhi's stay are a few tram tickets, but if you are susceptible to atmosphere, you will find the house blissfully calm.

It's an atmosphere Skye and Michael have fostered. Skye, now running her own fashion course, is the stylist. "I've been collecting for years: textiles, china, furniture, costumes. It's all in our home."

Michael has taken on the structural changes and additions. "In 1930, the house was called St. Winifred's Court and was a boarding house. There was a kitchen and loo on every landing, and the balconies had been converted into bathrooms and bedrooms. More recently, it was a shared house. We stripped everything down to the bare bones, we knocked down walls and put in stairs."

They bought the house in 1991, but it was 18 months before they moved in. "Our parents thought we were mad," says Skye. She's very proud of the fact that they have done most of the work themselves without the assistance of legions of builders and plumbers.

And it's this that makes the house so personal. In the sunny kitchen, which looks directly onto the street and is the heart of the house, the ordinary black-and-white tiles have been cut into

rectangular shapes to create a look reminiscent of a Viennese Secessionist house. Ironwork that Skye picked up for a song covers one window, hung with antique green glass balls. A watchmaker's workbench and Thirties cooker contribute to an idiosyncratic yet functional look.

"The house doesn't actually need furniture because the spatial quality of each room is fantastic," says Michael. The front door opens into the centre of the house; the kitchen, sitting room and dining room feature bulging bow-fronted windows, while the staircase rises like a centrifugal force and the bedrooms with balconies are flooded with light.

Yet the furniture is part of the whole: a magnificent Spanish-style seventeenth-century dresser stands in the hall, while the local ironwork bed in Michael and Skye's bedroom combines successfully with the Indian cushions and textiles that decorate it. "I have a friend at the Oriental Plaza who finds antique textiles for me in India—I'm very influenced by the fact that Gandhi lived here," explains Skye.

Like most old houses, it's full of surprises. Along the narrow corridor on the third floor, you'll find a dumbwaiter (to be restored) and a thin, winding staircase. This leads onto the roof, with a magnificent view, perfect for parties and sleeping during hot weather. Follow the main staircase, and you'll find a cellar—the original kitchen and living area—now a study and workroom. "We've tried to respect the house for what it is and to take the architecture back to its original state without sacrificing our lifestyle," says Michael.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH GANDHI

Lucian Blaga*

Getting off at Lausanne station, I made for the cinema hall mentioned on the invitation card. Arriving there, I hesitated for a moment as I could see no visitor, no movement and could hear no voice, no footstep noise. A policeman, seeing my confusion, firmly urged me in.

I stepped in. The hall was empty. The conference was to begin 45 minutes later. The stage, looking like the stage of a small theatre, was ready. There was a long green table and some chairs round it. To have a better sight of Gandhi, who was supposed to take the seat in the middle, I sat down in the front row. And I waited. Little by little, the hall grew full of people. Many had come from Geneva. They were restlessly moving around, expressive, tormented faces: sectants' intolerable faces, rather weathered English Indico' long faces, professionally distorted masks of intellectuals, professors, writers, journalists. Most of them envied my seat.

We waited there longer than it would have been proper and even longer than the time mentioned on the invitation card. The hall was overcrowded, noisy and heavy with curiosity. And we

* The late Lucian Blaga was an eminent poet and philosopher of Romania. He was present in a meeting addressed by Gandhiji in Lausanne in Switzerland in December 1931. This article was first published in May 1943 in a magazine called *Salcolum*.

were waiting. From behind some backstage heavy curtains there finally came a few Hindus; some of them were wearing their national costumes, others were dressed in European clothes. They sat down on the chairs in the corners as if they wanted to place a sacred distance between themselves and the prophet. And we waited again.

Here he was at last: the little man bearing the name of the "Great Spirit", Mahatma. He came up from behind the same heavy curtains and hurried to the table. He was wearing a white woollen robe down to his knees, and sandals. He looked as if he felt a little cold. And just when we thought he would sit on the chair in the middle of the stage, to everybody's astonishment he stepped on to the chair, then on to the table and sat down in Buddha's posture. This way of introducing himself was so quick and with such natural gestures, or better said, without any futile gestures, that there was not a single hilarious sound as expected after that intense surprise, but a total silence slightly accompanied by a tender smile. The natural grace of the austere person's stepping and sitting on the table in front of those Europeans not at all used to such a show convinced and impressed the religiously silent audience.

Then Gandhi started to speak in such a way that everybody was astonished: it was the concise, unadorned style characteristic only of the spirits who could see the ultimate essence. No gestures used by an orator, no rhetorical modulation of the voice, nothing sought for to captivate the audience, nothing of that unbearable pose of a speaker. Gandhi spoke English in short sentences, reduced to subject and predicate. He uttered only one sentence slowly, unostentatiously. A French man was standing near the table and translating each sentence while Gandhi went on in a monotonous rhythm. His head, surprisingly ugly in photos, was so deeply transfigured that he was no longer ugly despite the missing teeth. In this man everything was reduced to essence, even his appearance, even the number of his teeth: the useless one had fallen.

Gandhi left the strong impression of a man who was permanently concentrated inside himself; but for his concentration was no longer an effort but an organic state. Without looking rigid, his face had the strictly necessary mimic. No nervous gesture, no futile gesture. Not a single word in vain. Everything was kept under control without any artificiality. Gandhi talked as naturally as he kept silence. In fact, what he said was of less importance, as he told us what most of us had already known: that he was

worried by the situation in Europe, that facts in Europe were not compatible with the spirit. But the way he spoke, that was the bewildering thing. It was totally stripped of any accents that could remind one of a declamatory tone.

There it was just in front of me for the very first time, the preponderance of the spiritual existence over the word. There it was, the supreme nakedness of the supreme spirit. Long as I wandered abroad—and I did spend much of my life beyond the boundaries of my country—did I have the frequent opportunity to meet and listen to famous people: writers, artists, thinkers, critics, statesmen. I met Ludwig Klages, the philosopher looking like a Dionysiac vicar, count Keyserling, a versatile person who had misplaced his papers ten times during only one lecture; I listened to Husserl, the modest and clumsy philosopher; I saw Thomas Mann, the writer looking like Herr Professor; I listened to the great French critic Thibaudet who reminded one of a noble wine salesman; I met the brightest German critic Gundolf, a handsome man with a devil's phosphorescent eyes; I met Dacque, the dreaming naturalist; I met Leo Frobenius, the stomy spiritual philosopher of culture and discovered of the African spirit; I listened to Sven Hedin, the energetic, stony conqueror of Tibet; I met so many people. I could describe Mussolini's looks and way of speaking, Salazar's profile, the Catholic with a metallic soul, or the moustache and way of speaking of Pilsudsky who resembled Nietzsche's mask.

I have always thought that the work is superior to man. In other words, I have always considered existence to be covered by word. For the first and last time, there in front of Gandhi, whose way of speaking brought into relief a total absence of verbosity, I was overwhelmed by the feeling that I was witnessing a superior existence, beyond the word.

After finishing what he had to say, perhaps just to fill the gap created around him by our European and journalistic curiosity, Gandhi requested to be asked questions, willing to cope with the questionnaire. One of his men collected the written questions from the audience. Gandhi took them one by one and answered them unhesitatingly. Someone had asked him: "Why don't you attribute the huge movement you are leading in India to the divine inspiration?" Gandhi deciphered the question, kept silent for a moment, then he gave a reply as if moulded in bronze, but his voice had again avoided any demonstrative emphasis: "The movement assigned to me is of divine nature. Everything good in it is

divine, everything bad in it is mine". That was so simply, un-
eclamatorily uttered that the whole audience thought that the
man truly believed what he was saying. And I said to myself:
nobody can deny this natural, sincere tone. Jesus of Nazareth
might have had the same tone when he spoke on the Lilies hill
about God's heaven. After that, Gandhi reminded us that he had
to leave us as he must pray. That was the signal for everybody's
departure. Back to Berne, I told Marti: "The feeling cannot be
described; to describe it would be a sacrilege. But be sure that I,
who have always despised oratory, have now a real hatred for
this shallow art. This is going to be my thirty years' war". □

MAHATMA

N. Nazarbaev

The name of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, one of the outstanding thinkers and political figures of contemporary history, is very well known in Kazakhstan. It is not only due to close political, economic and cultural ties between our countries, but also on account of the similarity of their historical developments. For a long time as our countries were colonies, this had a special effect on the outlook of their peoples and their attitudes towards the laws and regulations existing at that time, as well as their unique vision of forms and methods of achieving their independence. The experience of the liberation movement in India, based on the programmes of non-cooperation and civil disobedience which were launched by Mahatma Gandhi on the basis of a profound understanding of national interests, was thoroughly studied in our republic.

Personally I was strongly impressed by the qualities of Gandhi. One of the main characteristic features was, in my view, his devotion to the ideals which he nurtured through all his life. Many of his spiritual and moral values and political ideals, such as search for truth, non-violence, freedom, democracy and peace, elimination of caste differences and emancipation of women, are not of transient importance. Gandhi devotedly loved his country, was very close to its people, knew their interests and expectations and could mobilise them for the independence struggle. He worked hard for the unity of the nation. Gandhi had played a great role in making the Indian National Congress a mass political organisation which led the people to victory.

As regards the extent of Gandhi's influence on people, I feel like comparing him with Abai—a great Kazakh thinker, poet and pioneer whose 150th anniversary is going to be celebrated in 1995 in accordance with the decision of UNESCO. In his unprecedented creative power, versatility of his writer's image and the spontaneity of his creative development—the spiritual force of the people, which though under oppression could preserve its proud endeavour for freedom and against tyranny, violence and despotism, was expressed.

Compared to India, Kazakhstan is a young country with a two-year experience of independence. But even in such a short period we have achieved considerable progress in internal as well as in foreign policies in establishment of a democratic, secular and unitary state, development of market economy and integration into the world community.

Our relations with India, which was one of the first countries to recognise the independence of Kazakhstan, are on a qualitatively new level today due to establishment of diplomatic relations, my recent visits there and signing of a series of bilateral documents. But what is more important is the memory which people in India cherish for everything connected with the name of Mahatma Gandhi, as I could see from my meeting with people there. □

GREATNESS OF SOUL

Catherine Clément

Before getting to know India and becoming forever attached to her, I knew virtually nothing about the Mahatma. Born before the war into a Jewish family that was widely massacred by the Nazis, I had been brought up on the idea of the Resistance, which meant bombs, attacks and violence. The very idea of non-violence shocked me deeply, for, I felt that if the Jews had only defended themselves against the Nazis they would perhaps have survived. This just shows that this tremendous, little man with a toothless smile only inspired vague irony in me, nothing more.

Later, when the cold war had reached the zenith of the star wars, and when Pershing missiles were to be deployed on German soil, I rose in protest and signed pacifist petitions, in spite of the stand of François Mitterrand, our President. I hate war, having known it far too closely. Two years later, following a government directive, I began to work with Indian institutions: the time had come to know Gandhiji, but I knew nothing about him. During my first official visit to India, I was taken around Birla House and I really feel that it was there that I felt the impact, right there, in front of the black and white photographs. In front of that toothless smile, that kindly gaze, the affectionate irony—strangely thrown back at me by the illustrious figure—and above all, in front of that strange body, both fragile and powerful at once. I wanted to know everything there was to know about the Mahatma; I first discovered the pious images, the sacred legend, then, slowly, all on my own, I also discovered the weaknesses of the great man,

his flaws, his weak points. He had been an unruly child, he had given vent to anger, his body used to betray him constantly, he had great difficulty in controlling his sexual urges. I was delighted with the cigarettes smoked on the sly, the meat dishes devoured in secret and that he later used to throw up; in short, I preferred the man, even the child, to the god. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had nothing of the deified guru about him and what was better still, refused this status. From that moment on, I was completely won over. I had yet to understand the essence of the man: why had Tagore called him by this composite name, *Mahatma*, made up of greatness and Atman?

The first Frenchman who understood the greatness of Gandhi was Romain Rolland. He is today more famous in India than in France where he has been forgotten. Romain Rolland belonged, like I did, to the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* that was founded by Napoleon. He was a student there during the years of the Dreyfus Affair at the close of the last century; it was there, that he experienced his first ecstasies. Seventy years later, the *Ecole* had hardly changed. When I joined in 1959, it had taken to polemics between Christians and Marxists, and one came across communist mystics who were every bit as ecstatic as their elders of the previous century. I understood a little of India through Romain Rolland, who strangely enough never went to India but who wrote the most marvellous French book on the independence struggle, *Inde, Journal, 1915–1943* (India Diary, 1915–1943). 1915—at the height of the war, Rolland remained hopelessly pacifistic. 1943—at the height of the war, he died, horribly disappointed by the betrayal of Subhas Chandra Bose, who had joined forces with the Nazi enemy, something that was beyond the comprehension of the persecuted French. Between the two world wars, Romain Rolland had ardently supported the Indian cause whose triumph he was never to see.

His first Indian friend was not Gandhi, but Tagore the poet, Tagore the Brahmin, the erudite, the elegant one whom he admired but whom he sometimes found a little flippant in his ties with Mussolini. Apart from this small error, Rolland forgave Tagore everything, “that tall scatterbrain with the voice of a nightingale”; but though he was under Tagore’s spell, he was on the lookout for Gandhi with a great deal of hope. People came from all over to tell him about the Mahatma; they spoke of hartals, of the civil disobedience movement, of fasts and special diets, they described the tics of “the short lawyer from Madras” (Rolland’s informers

were often wrong...). He ended up knowing everything about his monotonous voice and his magnetic power, the gaps in his teeth, his tone, "that of an old aunt" "reciting a string of admonitions". Rolland had never been to India and had not yet met Gandhi; however, under his pen, the portrait of this unknown man took shape, startling in its mysterious accuracy. Gandhi had still not come, but Tagore was often there, and the more Tagore was there, the more Gandhi was present, even in absence.

The French Rolland was quick to sense the antagonism between the two men: Tagore, the tall Bengali Brahmin, a man from east India, refined, tormented, reserved, tyrannical and poetic, did not espouse Gandhi's ideas at all. Gandhi, the merchant from Gujarat, a barrister at the London bar, realistic, open-minded, pragmatic and determined. For Tagore, Gandhi was a reactionary, far too Indian, too backward. It was quite simply a conflict of generations, social classes, education, styles of living: between the long tunic of the poet and the dhoti of the politician lay a deepening Indian chasm. Distinguished and lofty, one was progressive, as was customary in Bengal, in the wake of the Brahmo Samaj; the other was revolutionary as was customary in Gujarat and Maharashtra, with a sense of action, a direct contact with the people. Nothing is more comical than Romain Rolland's accounts of the Mahatma's visits to Shantiniketan. Gandhiji makes a beeline for the kitchens and, as always, first inspects the toilets; Tagore is horrified. Rolland still did not know India and had yet to meet Gandhi.

Finally, in 1931, when the Mahatma was returning from the London Conference, Rolland welcomed the long awaited hero. The meeting took place in Villeneuve, in Switzerland. It was raining. "I see him coming towards me in his white burnous, his head uncovered under the light drizzle, the bare, thin, stilt-like legs, this small, bespectacled, toothless man who is laughing..." "And he leans his cheek against my shoulder, encircling me with his right arm: against my cheek is his grey head, closely-cropped with rough, wet hair." Each time I reread these lines, I too, believe I feel the rough hair of the Mahatma's head that Rolland describes at length with the greatest precision for many pages. Rolland sees everything: the strength under the fragile exterior, the swollen veins on the back of his hands, the wrinkles that appear while he speaks, the astonishing absence of wrinkles while in repose. The suppressed tension. And the hyperaesthesia: the exaggerated sensitivity that made his skin suffer, that drew grimaces of pain

from him, even when it was massaged by Mirabeau's gentle hands. This is the portrait of a saint: what the West calls a saint.

For a man as profoundly European as Romain Rolland, the only comparable model to Gandhi was to be found in the pious image of Saint Francis of Assisi, friend of the birds and the unaffected. It is difficult to avoid transposition, which betrays like all translations do: *traduttore traditore*. Rolland betrays the Mahatma a little when he transposes compassion into charity, the Gandhian practices of vegetarian diet, of the fast unto death, and especially, the precise meaning and the yogic origins of *Brahmacharya* into Christian asceticism. The "golden legend" envelops in the same fold the Italian saint and the Indian freedom fighter of the 20th century. However, though extremely European, the filter is not entirely deceptive. Rolland takes from Hinduism its universal aspect, regardless of its specific tolerances, its absence of dogma, its distinctive capacities. But, it is as a European that Rolland is able to find the best way to describe Gandhiji as "the mule saint". March 1928: "I have noticed that Gandhi is more grateful for criticism levelled at him than for praise: it is as though he derives exquisite pleasure from it, similar to a shower that awakens and stimulates the entire being. And what's more, this stubborn old fellow would not concede an iota of the errors that he is condemned for. He likes you better for standing up to him. But, basically he is a mule—a mule saint." For anyone who is familiar with the mythical significance of the donkey in the West: a stubborn, obstinate animal who is the possessor of a wisdom that can withstand any ordeal. The donkey is the symbol of stubbornness but also of a sublime and secret intelligence and is first of all imbued with a divine force. It is the animal of inspired fools and learned men, that of poets and rebels; it is the anticonformist animal par excellence. The brilliant star of "the great sentinel" from Bengal grew dim with jealousy. But there was no going back: Rolland preferred Gandhi to Tagore, for Gandhi did not succumb to the appeal of the fascist dictator, Mussolini. Nazism was already hatching its monstrous eggs in Europe. Rolland who saw the rise of the communists in Bengal—amongst whom was Tagore's own nephew—, Rolland who understood everything about India, the author of the biographies of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Gandhi himself, and who knew all her leaders without exception,—including the little Indira—this Rolland passed away without having known the India of his dreams.

In France today, the Mahatma no longer needs a Romain

Rolland to be discovered. A well-loved and famous figure, for each generation he is the incarnation of the eternally young image of an old stubborn adolescent, the model of a good revolt, a peaceful, innocent and pacific revolt without violence. My children cried while seeing Attenborough's film; their children will do the same I am sure. He has certain similarities with the great Christian heroes of French history: "Mr. Vincent"—Saint Vincent de Paul, apostle of the galley slaves in the 17th century, or, much closer to us in time, Abbot Pierre, that old man who is so alive and who is today fighting against the very real French poverty. The French cannot be reproached for their admittedly very Christian vision that is, all said and done, very accurate; they have retained the image of a fight for justice and are not aware of the rest. They would be utterly surprised if they were informed of the polemic that today surrounds the memory of Gandhiji.

He refused modernity. He was archaic. He did not rise up against the caste system as a whole. He only fought for the "Harijans"... He was too devout, too anchored in the religious, not secular enough. Ambedkar is preferred to him... yes, the French would be very surprised: how does India, which has had the luck to have for a father a man such as him, dare to criticise him? When the entire French youth is revolting, even as I write this, against the "Money first" attitude, how is Gandhi being reproached for his backwardness? They have to be reminded that he was assassinated by a Hindu for the protests to cease. "Oh yes, it's true," I'm told in Paris, and they add, "But, basically, it's always like this. One is never betrayed except by one's own".

The parricidal instinct of peoples is without equal. Anyone who occupies a paternal position must pay the price: this was not discovered by an Indian, but by a Viennese Jew, Sigmund Freud. If this does not occur during the hero's own lifetime, it happens after his death. In France, in 1969, the country "killed" the absolute father that General de Gaulle had become by hounding him out of power, by a simple vote against him over a mere trifle, a question of decentralisation that has become the accepted norm since then. De Gaulle died a year later; but ten years later, he was literally sanctified. The assassinated Mahatma remains the Father of the Nation: alas! he has to pay the price of this paternity for sometime, before being reborn like the phoenix, for such is the law of peoples.

And yet... I find him more maternal than paternal. It is as a mother that he suffers the dissensions among his "children",

as a mother that he calms them. Anthropologists are well acquainted with these mysterious signs that transform from one sex to another virility into femininity or femininity into masculinity. Gandhi was extraordinarily virile, without a single sign of effeminateness; but he was an inspired man and therefore, maternal. In the same way, Saint Teresa of Avila, who was so womanly in the description of her ecstasies, was so authoritarian that Saint John of Lacroix used to call her "Il Padrecito", the Small Father. The charismatic function requires heroes who take on all the qualities of the two sexes: if the hero is a man, he will be maternal; if a woman, then paternal. In both cases, it is a triumph of a remarkable gentleness that is universally attested and that is the hallmark of the inspired, of founders, fighters and independent thinkers, and is not at all a trait of heads of state.

This has long been a tradition of India, one that from century to century makes men of peace emerge in the midst of massacres... Buddha, Mahavira, Guru Nanak, Dara Shukoh, Ram Mohun Roy, Vivekananda, Gandhiji, Vinobha Bhave: like a witness in a relay race, the spirit of peace flies from age to age, always lofty, never abandoned for long, to the "meeting point of two oceans" on which the Sufi prince wrote and where he laid down his life. The price has to be paid, but it is an incalculable one. The price is being paid in India, but India alone has the resources that the warlike West is unaware of. Economic development changes almost nothing, but this "almost" is decisive. If economics prevails completely, if the market law dominates as is today the universal rule, then the awakening of the spirit that is resistant to money, to its powers, must be awaited. The spirit is not for sale: no one demonstrated this better than Gandhi. The spirit is not for sale: with a handful of salt an empire can be made to tremble. The spirit is not for sale: no economic consideration had any hold over his ideas. The spirit is not for sale: he died of this.

This is in fact the very glory of the spirit, that it can categorically refuse the real; it is its honour and pride. Romain Rolland had understood this: sometimes, the spirit seems absurd. With his bags of wet clay on the head, his obsessions with constipation, his dietary manias, his rejection of allopathic medicine, Gandhiji sometimes seems a tiny bit ridiculous. This is however of no importance, for the ridiculous never killed the spirit; that's fair enough, it's not serious and will pass. For what remains engraved in the popular subconscious, is not the economist but the hero. It is not the king but the rebel. And if he is mistaken about the

real, he will in the long run only be greater than ever: peoples are like this, ungrateful to those who feed them, and grateful to those who give them the flame of ideals: from the greatness of soul, emerges a great soul, *Mahatma*. □

Translated from the French by Radha Sharma

MAHATMA GANDHI*

Charanvit Kasetsiri

Among the world-famous personalities, Mahatma Gandhi stands out as one of the most well known. Famous emperors and generals were usually known only during their lifetime when they played important roles; but Mahatma Gandhi, apart from being famous in his own days, can still impress the whole world with his virtue and good deeds for mankind.

What he did in his lifetime has become a model for a fight for freedom, truth and justice, a model for self-sacrifice that expects no personal reward whatsoever.

On the occasion of the 125th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, we should all realize how fortunate it was for the world that on the 2nd of October 1869 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbandar in Gujarat Province of India.

From his own autobiography, we learn that in his youth he was very shy and did wrong things like all of us. For example, he ate meat secretly although he was supposed to be a vegetarian. He was convinced by his friends that Indians were weak because they were not meat-eaters. Englishmen, being meat-eaters, could rule over Indians. Determined to overcome the English, Gandhi and friends ate meat in secrecy several times. Finally he repented for his misdeeds. Realizing that it was wrong to deceive his parents who would be deeply pained if they came to know of his having

* Speech delivered by Dr. Charanvit Kasetsiri, Rector of Thammasat University at Thai—Bharat Cultural Lodge, Bangkok.

become a meat-eater, Gandhi made a decision never to eat meat again.

From his childhood, Gandhi gradually learnt and absorbed the meaning of ahimsa and truthfulness from his parents and from some literary works such as a play called *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka* (which is similar to *Suvarnasam Jataka* well known to Thai people) and another play named *Harishchandra*. Gandhi said he could never be tired of seeing the play *Harishchandra* because Harishchandra's truthfulness captured his heart. Mahatma Gandhi tried to develop his moral character. He changed from a youth susceptible to weaknesses into a man of truth.

Mahatma Gandhi strongly believed that morality is the root of all things and truth is the essence of all morality. He therefore held fast to truth and could use the power of truth as a weapon against British imperialism.

Although Mahatma Gandhi was a Hindu, his world was not a Hindu world but a world of the whole humanity. He believed that all men are brothers and one must fight evil with good. His deeds conformed to his beliefs.

In his simple way of living, Mahatma Gandhi did not accumulate wealth. On his journeys, he had two bags. One contained paper, pencils, needle and thread, an earthen bowl and a wooden spoon, a spinning wheel, and his "three gurus": wooden monkeys closing ears, mouth and eyes. The other bag contained four books: the *Bhagavad Gita*, *al-Quran*, the *Practice and Precepts of Jesus*, and *Jewish Thoughts*.

It is evident that Mahatma Gandhi tried to grasp the truth of every religion and was against none. His tolerance and self-sacrifice for humanity made Gandhi well-respected and most admired by Indians and the whole world.

The title "Mahatma" given to him by the Nobel-prize poet Rabindranath Tagore had been accepted by all because Gandhi had a great soul according to the title. Mahatma Gandhi's biography and works should be part of every school's and university's curriculum so that the younger generations can learn from his life.

What Mahatma Gandhi tried to stress was the love that human beings should feel for one another without the barriers of colours, castes, races and religions. Gandhi defined ahimsa as love and good will which can bring man towards Truth or God. Before acquiring ahimsa, man must purify his heart from passions and attachment. It is very hard to do. Yet from Mahatma Gandhi's life, we know it can be done. Therefore, we all should strive to follow his example. □

GANDHI IN MODERN ARABIC LITERATURE

Omar-El-Haqqaq

When Gandhi crossed the Suez canal in 1931, the British rulers of Egypt prevented the Egyptians, who were afire with revolutionary zeal, from meeting him on Egyptian soil. Nevertheless, this visit of Gandhi was a historical event, which proved once again the deep understanding between Indians and Arabs and their strong feeling of having a common destiny. Gandhi was a hero of the East and the Egyptian people found in him a stubborn opponent to the colonialist, the common enemy. The then Prime Minister of Egypt Mustafa Al Nahhas had expressed this feeling, which was heard among the masses of his nation, in his speech on Gandhi. He said: "In the name of Egypt that is struggling for her freedom and independence, I welcome, in your person, the great leader of India, a country which also is fighting to achieve the same goal." Mrs. Sofia Zughloul, the leader of the first woman demonstration in the Arab homeland during the Egyptian revolution of 1919, had, also expressed this sentiment and respect towards the great leader of the East.

Perhaps the most distinguished person who gave an expression of the Arab sentiment and the extent of the admiration for the steadfast India and for her unique leader was the great poet Ahmad Showquie who composed a poem when Gandhi passed by Egypt on his way to the Round Table Conference in London for negotiation with the British Government on the quest of his

country's independence. Showquie was the best person to express what was troubling the mind of the people of his nation, because of his interaction with the sufferings and objectives of his country and because of his deep knowledge of his nation. He found the arrival of the greatest man of India to Egypt as a historic event. Showquie wrote a poem of forty verses. He began the poem saying:

The sons of Egypt raise the (branches of) laurel tree and greet the hero of India discharge your duty by acknowledging the demands for the rights of the unique flag.

The Egyptian poet hailed the Indian leader as a man inspired by nationalism and right politics different from the men and politicians of the age, so he raised him to the highest status. Gandhi to Showquie was like the awaited "Mahdi" or as one of the prophets and messengers. He said:

A prophet like Confucius or like one of that age.

Similar in (his) sayings and deeds to the much awaited "Mahdi".

To Showquie, the spiritual and the creative power, with which Gandhi was born was not to be found in an ordinary way, but as to be gained by great fortune. It is a gift from the beneficent God to his good servants. It is not to be derived by force of material possession, wealth and power of arms, but is a gift from God to his servant.

Showquie's poem referred to the communal problem, the chronic disease had spread in India and the Arab countries equally like a cancer. So what about Gandhi's great message of tolerance which the Arabs were longing for? On this Showquie says:

He fought with rightness, patience and endeavour.

The sick souls came (to him for treatment) and he cured them of hatred.

He called the Hindus and Muslims for love and harmony.

With magic spiritual power. He put two swords in one sheath.

Perhaps the most important factor in the theme of the poem of Showquie is that it had brought together the sorrows of the two nations which resulted from the occupation of India and the Arab lands. The poet mentioned Saad Zaghloul (1927), the leader of Egypt, and Gandhi, the leader of India, who bore severe suffering and bitter hardship. The Egyptian leader suffered throughout his persistent struggle and unjust exile. They tried to unite the cause of the two nations which suffered during their struggles.

Your brother in sufferings and in experience of painful situation,
in endeavour, and aim, in injury, tear and exile.

Then what a salute! Showquie saluted Gandhi in the following verses:

The thin great man, dressed in coarse cloth, owner of spindle and
milcher of goat.

Salam to the milcher of goat.

Salam to the spinner of garments.

Gandhi became in the hearts of millions of people the symbol of the leadership of the East in its challenge to the West. This spirit of the East, began to grow with force in the Arab generation in the beginning of this century. This spirit began to appear clearly among the Arabs in the form of an innermost feeling of affection between them and the other people, subjugated by the West in the great East.

Arabs generally trust their leaders but they gained immediate gains and then were shattered. Therefore they were eager for a genuine leadership like that of Gandhi to take the sinking ship of the Arab lands to the shore of safety. The Palestinian poet Ibrahim Tawqan was, always, warning of the gloomy end of his country and was looking, hopelessly and despairingly for a skillful leader like Gandhi:

How nice it would be if one from among our leaders would fast,
like Gandhi, then his fasting might be useful.

Tawqan, then describes, with bitterness and irony the malady of the leadership of his country:

In love and affections with the home-land but only in words and
not in deeds.

A hero when he speaks from the dais, but he loses no time to
retreat from the battle-field.

In the verses of Ilyas Qunsul we find him considering the struggles of a number of the eastern nations as one. He speaks about the Syrian revolution and the French oppression as well as the Palestinian struggle and the Zionist terrorism. Then he mentions in the same poem the struggle of India and her great leader. All these because of his feeling for the concept of the common cause. He considers Gandhi as one of the prophets.

The frail Gandhi is a prophet, one among those prophets and messengers sent by God. This is because Gandhi was the focus of attention for the Arabs who lived in the land they had

migrated to that is America. They had for Gandhi love, respect and admiration, no less than what the Indians felt for him. Hence, the rural poet Rasheed Salim Al-Khuri made him look as god. He, also, considered him as an example of the leadership, the East gave birth to. Therefore he was proud of him as a force against the West. Rasheed says:

A lion roared on the shores of the Ganges to our ears it was sweeter
than the coo of dove,
A voice that the Christ of India repeats in Delhi must be listened
to by the Christ of Syria.

The poet, whenever he revolted against abjectness of his people and disunity of their leaders exhorted them to struggle like Gandhi of India. So when Id was celebrated after fasting of Ramadhan he said pointing out to the difference between the fasting of the Muslims and that of Gandhi.

Fasting until the sword breaks it with his blood.
Silent be my mouth, until truth comes out.

Mikhail Noema, who was another leader of the men of letters of Mahjar (place of emigration) had a deep knowledge of the objectives of the East and of the contents of the Gandhian message. He found in Gandhi another picture of Christ which contains many of his characteristics and presents many of the qualities in his message which are embodied in non-violence. According to Mikhail Noema, Gandhi did repeat Christ's exhortation from the mountain. This had changed his behaviour and teachings later on. Noema's admiration for Gandhi was such that he called him the conscience of the awakening East. Likewise, he in several of his articles, described Gandhi, with great enthusiasm, as the symbol of spirituality of the East. He said: "The East is endowed and the West is rational. The West is the ruler and the East is the ruled. The West is going to set and the East is going to rise."

If Noema found in Gandhi a unique spiritual human being, he found in him, also a unique nationalist hero. Gandhi had achieved an obvious victory for his nation, but at the same time, it was also a clear victory for his message. On this point he says:

The spindle in the hand of Gandhi became sharper than the sword;
the simple white sheet in which Gandhi's thin body was wrapped
became an armour-plate which could not be affected by the guns
from the fleets of the master of the seas and the goat of Gandhi
became stronger than the British Lion.

The voice of Arabic literature in both in prose and verse with reference to the loss of Gandhi, was a truthful, sorrowful and sincere voice. And in the far-away lands of Brazil and in the Arabian oasis of the foreign and strange desert, the poet Farhat had expressed the incident of killing of Gandhi in elegiac prose which is much more poetical than poetry itself. This is under the title "The death of Gandhi".

Gandhi is dead.....Gandhi is killed

Certainly the hand that poured poison in the cup of Socrates is the hand that nailed Christ on the cross.

It is the hand of blind fanaticism and senseless hatred.

- Gandhi, who lived his life as an angel within the mad conglomeration of the satans among Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and the untouchables, is killed.
- The spiritual Brahim leader who did not carry any arm and did not bless anyone who carries it had died.
- He loved his enemies and blessed those who cursed him....so what a great shame as in the death of Christ.
- The leader, who fought with the weapons of truth and had won, has died, so what a shame for tyrannical and fierce people.
- Gandhi died—the unique man of humanity died. He is killed—a son of humanity is killed.
- Certainly, humanity, that crowned the thieves and the killers as kings and emperors, has killed Socrates, Christ and Gandhi.
- So woe unto this humanity which keeps the thieves alive, and kills the reformers.
- Woe unto this humanity for her fanatic sons and woe unto her for the problems created by the hypocritical and shameless politicians, who nominate their selves and their partners for Nobel prize for peace and forget Gandhi.
- And no wonder that peace that Gandhi wanted was genuine and based on love, truth and justice, while the others want peace, based on hypocrisy, conspiracy, robbery and force.
- Gandhi's peace is that of doves that twitter in the branches, and their peace is of that of the wolves which howl around the corpses.
- This poisoned humanity does not know that it has lost the best of her sons, the finest among all people and the nearest to God.

Gandhi was thus a symbol of intellectual interaction between the Indians and the Arabs. His love for the Arabs, and his full knowledge of their history and then the Arab admiration for him and his leadership were reiterated again and again by the common Arabs in their talks, by prose writers in their writings and by the poets in their verses. All this shows that this unique man was not for India alone but also for the Arabs and all the people of the world longing for freedom. He was the spirit of the great East, which still reveals itself to humanity, its deep sensitivity for the unity of the fate of humankind and endeavouring for a rich human life of truth, justice, freedom, brotherhood and peace. □

“ACTING” AS GANDHI

Ben Kingsley

During rehearsals for *Nicholas Nickleby* at the Aldwych Theatre in 1980, I began reading an illustrated biography of Mahatma Gandhi. I had always found that unique figure and his destiny profoundly moving and compelling, and the book, texts and photographs are no exception. In fact the effect of the famous face was even more powerful.

Ten days later, when the giant production of *Nicholas Nickleby* opened in London, I received a phone call during the intermission. It was from Dicki Attenborough who told me that I was one of the five actors being considered for the title role in his forthcoming feature film *Gandhi*. He asked to meet me in Richmond the following day. Richard and I formed an instant rapport, and one month and two screen-tests later, the role was mine.

My preparation began by watching five hours of documentary footage of Bapu, and my initial response to the material was that no actor, let alone myself, could capture that unique presence and force. I arrived in Delhi in late October of 1980; I had never visited India before. I felt as one who had been cast to play Romeo and had no knowledge or foretaste of his Juliette. Gandhi was my Romeo, India was his beloved Juliette.

On arriving in Delhi, I fell in love with India instantly, though there was no way of predicting this overwhelming reaction. I began preparing in earnest. I lost a lot of weight, shaved my head, acquired a deep Indian tan, learned all of my lines, began Yoga

classes to loosen my limbs and increase my stamina. Something was missing, I realised, when offered a mechanical spinning wheel that I could “mime” to, what the missing element was. I had to learn to spin. So during the shooting I commenced spinning lessons. I felt this simple, humble act was the key, or my actor’s key to the character.

Tom Smith was my make-up man on Gandhi; a superb craftsman whose art in transforming me from the boyish lawyer on the train to the old sage in Birla gardens was quite miraculous. I cannot thank him enough for his endless perseverance and kindness. We did not film in chronological order, I moved through all the “ages of man” from day to day. Richard Attenborough is so attentive and loving as a director, and he guided me through the days, weeks and months with great authority and sensitivity. Each day we filmed was blessed with a great sense of occasion. Every shot and set-up for the cameras was an event. The energy swiftly accumulated and became self-perpetuating and regenerative.

My first “test” came when I was to address a vast crowd on the issue of Khadi and imported cloth from England. I walked out in front of 20,000 extras, clad in the new iconographic dhoti, sandals, shawl and spectacles.

The crowd rose spontaneously to its feet and roared its approval. I will never forget that moment. I cannot convey in words the love, simple gratitude and joy that constantly emanated from the ordinary people towards myself and the man I was attempting to portray. This validation was a tremendous support to word over task. I must also say how welcoming and instructive were my fellow Indian actors, Roshan Seth, Neena Gupta and Rohini Hattangadi. They would spend hours with me walking through villages, talking of India as they knew and loved her, introducing me to music, song and dance, aspects of worship and the million contradictions and harmonious things that make India the great and unique sub-continent she is.

Speaking of encouragement it perhaps came in its simplest and purest form one day in a large tent at lunch time. Richard told me that Rajmohan was coming to lunch. Rajmohan Gandhi. I was a bundle of nerves. I felt like an impostor about to be exposed. I was preparing to shoot a scene where Bapu was about 70 years old, this was just as he appeared in the photograph of himself by the sea, his cane over his shoulder, a little boy trotting behind, laughing and holding the end of the cane. That “little boy” was the man now coming to lunch. I sat between Raj Mohan

and Richard, trying to get food from the plate into my mouth, my hands so unsteady, my food spraying and dropping anywhere but where it was supposed to go, whilst they talked about the filming. Finally, Richard left to make final adjustments to lights and cameras, and I sat alone with Raj Mohan. After minutes of silence, he turned to me and said, "You are being guided by unseen forces—God bless you, I wish you well". Where else in the world but India can one find such utter grace and simplicity?

Another indelible memory. The last scene we filmed in Delhi was the great funeral scene. I was invited to watch. A fantasy come true! I was to witness my own funeral. Tom Smith had modelled a dummy to lie in the funeral bier. That morning, just as I was about to leave the hotel, Richard called me from the set. Close-ups on the model of Bapu were not satisfactory. I was to come in person made up as the now deceased Bapu and lie on the funeral bier, under the flag, myself. My heart was pounding. I arrived to discover that the camera crews were filming a scene that included no less than 400,000 people, the largest crowd in motion picture history.

I remained utterly still on the bier for three hours, using my invaluable Yoga techniques, and could hear the cries of the crowd, feel the flower petals shower over me, hear in moments of astonishing silence, the crunch of the 400 Indian service mens' boots on the Raj Path as they marched and towed me along.

At the 'India Gate' I rose stiffly from the bier and thanked the crowd around me. They cheered, threw flowers, sang, and carried me to my car. What other actor has had such an experience? What other actor enjoys the affection of a whole sub-continent. I felt deeply blessed.

In Porbandar, Martin Sheen and I filmed the scene where Bapu conceives the idea of the great march to Dandi beach. Martin is an exquisite actor to work with, and that scene is one of the favourites of my career. When it came time to leave India I felt as though a layer of skin were being ripped off me. I flew back with my dear friend Ian Charleson who played Charlie Andrews, Ian who has since died of AIDS, what a loss! We looked down at the British Isles and it all looked a bit grey and colourless. It saddens me when Westerners wrinkle their noses at the prospect of visiting India, declaring they "could not stand the poverty". In the same years that the spiritual poverty of the West gave us Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, India's eternal richness gave the world Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. □

SOME REFLECTIONS

Gerald O' Brien

For many of the generation born in the 1920's the struggle for India holds a central place fired by concepts called "Satyagraha" and "Ahimsa" which found their expression through Mahatma Gandhi who has left the concepts as part of humanity's heritage.

When like a rising elephant India rose to its feet again after shaking off the domination by the group of tribes from the Western tip of Europe whose technological knowledge had secured for them outrageous control of the peoples of the world and who backed their control by semi-religious or psuedo-religious creeds and affirmations designed to justify continuity of control, the vacuum of history had left India's people with too distant a cultural inheritance upon which to draw.

Low levels of general education fed social incoherence that projected forth a demand for strong individual leadership that was the antithesis of the democracy many believed essential to restoration of India's greatness even though the process was lacking in Indian history.

Earlier this century there came together so many Indians of brilliance whose surrender of their individuality to make common cause provided the means to retrieve Mother India from her enchainment. The great good fortune of India rests in the presence of Mohandas K. Gandhi. The respect which his own brilliance had earned enabled him to emphasise the importance of moral principle and to continue to resolutely demand compliance with that principle when political pressures sought compromises that in the end would have undermined all principle.

Gandhi became a world figure because he realised the need to influence Western thought and the need to change it if the East was to be freed. But his vision never constrained itself to India alone because of his beliefs which he held were universal. Born into a family the father of which had been given responsibility for the well-being of others, he quickly learned that violence retarded all human progress and that poverty was the worst form of violence, and he imbibed the fine sense of judgement which in spite of contemporary criticism from those near and not so near to him was proved in the sum total of his work.

Criticised by his associates on many occasions for inaction when action seemed essential, and condemned by the Left as a petty-bourgeois moraliser and reformist pacifist and for conciliation which made British rule easier in the eyes of both the Left and many British, those disparate elements later came to appreciate the fineness of his judgements and his absolute commitment to solutions without violence. Few now recall the vexatiousness felt by Pandit Nehru over his hunger strikes on social issues and even at the time when the Left felt that his humanitarianism denied access to the final struggle, all recognised an indefinable quality which earned respect. The struggle for India would today be inconceivable had Gandhiji not been the fulcrum, the guide, the mentor, the seer.

Maybe his strength of judgement lay in his refusal to accept that conclusions could be safely drawn within the limits of man's knowledge. He saw humanity in a cosmic sense and therefore as an entity merely starting upon the paths of history. Within the parameters of human history he had grown out of India, out of the land which had fathered Europe and which had mothered South Asia; so the thirty years of struggle to free India were for him infinitesimal. After all, the great sunburst in human knowledge that took place two and a half millenia ago in Greece took place over thirty years only; nevertheless that inheritance has become perpetual.

As he strode into the councils of India's occupiers he so disconcerted the oppressors as to play on some instinct that still survived amongst them to the general cause of humanity. He astounded and confused India's usurpers when he argued that since Faith cannot be proved by extraneous evidence, the Faith at the least avowed by the British even if in part hypocritically, then the safest course was to believe in the moral government of the world and therefore in the supremacy of the moral law, the

law, as he said, of truth and love. Few had thought of political negotiations or of dealing in political affairs in such a light. But he went further and stated that exercise of Faith, that is, the moral law, would be safest only where there was a clear determination summarily to reject all that is contrary to truth and love.

In expounding his beliefs he exposed the cynicism of the self-aggrandisers which posed behind pretensions of realism in such a manner as for all time to make available to human thought the method by which we should judge the goodness and the rectitude of things and of policies and actions. He recalled the West to its own traditions and returned a generation to again think about the rights of man and the duty of man.

The forces which animate peoples to change the directions of nations are reaction to unbounded oppression, but in India's case the Gandhi factor elevates India's recovery of itself through the features that inspired it, Satyagraha and Ahimsa, those features which distinguish India's struggle from the struggles of other nations to restore their dignity and self-rule. The lesson of India's struggle on Gandhian principles set the tone for the second attempt at world order that was the Charter of the United Nations even though that document was written prior to India's victory. Gandhiji had directed human thought to a belief that there could and ought to be a better world based on principles in a rosary of ideals whose binding string was inordinately provided by him.

How the world has subsequently responded to the duties imposed by what should be a binding document is all too sadly evident in the violence that still rules. But what of India itself? The pragmatist will say that one cannot change the culture, the values, the attitudes of a civilisation as old as India's without a very gradual process of education, self-realisation and then change. May be there is the paradox that Christianity poses that man cannot be good left to his own devices and that he needs God. Gandhiji might agree with this latter idea but he would do so coming from the breadth of his Hindu beliefs and his general spiritual catholicity. At all times he sought to teach the responsibility to elevate oneself through love.

So did the theme of love change India? Perhaps not but it did influence a generation, that generation which succeeded the line of Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerjea, Tilak and Gokhale, and which within the constraints set by the retention of much economic power by the former occupiers nonetheless returned India to its culture because of the lesson of the spinning

wheel. In the symbolic lesson of the spinning wheel Indians learned that recourse to their own culture also provided the nation with economic power and the duty to learn and be educated—one recalls that within the first ten years of restoration of India it was spending 1000 per cent more than the British ever spent on education, and industrial development and resource use were no longer restricted to the branch-plant formula of the British years. Those who have led India since regained freedom have ensured that the Unified State will ensure the limitation of excess. In that respect India today, notwithstanding the considerable pressures, can show the world that the present drift backwards towards tribalism, especially in Europe, need not be. The questions of relating general principle to specific cases of course remains and always will, but in India, unlike most other nations, stability depends upon the principles expounded by Mahatma Gandhi which permeate much of the nation's life in spite of the contemporary criticisms that those principles were never spelled out in codified form. Political and other leaders cannot claim to be under the Mahatma's cloak unless they have his uncompromising moral judgements and dedication on social issues which affect all life. It is easy to say that commitment to those principles of equality in social policy would have ensured—had they been followed completely—a more rapid emergence of the renewed India, but for that to have happened Gandhi himself would have to have lived. But his objectives are fundamentally the source of law for India and the promotion and exposition of them internationally ought well to become the basis of international behaviour. Because his concepts do not dominate world affairs as the world approaches the rewriting of the United Nations Charter does not lessen the need for them nor undermine their rectitude.

His greatest legacy was the ability to unify by the power of non-violence and as never before in modern history has this power been so needed. Its promotion at international level by the Government of his beloved India through some organisation that would focus world interest on his principles and their power might well in this one hundred and twenty-fifth year since his birth do as much for humanity as his moral authority did in surmounting all of the hurdles placed in the path of the freeing of India. □

GANDHI

Lord Listowel

I only had the good fortune to meet Gandhiji on one occasion, as I did not attend the Round Table Conference in London before the war. This memorable occasion was while I was staying with Lord Mountbatten in New Delhi after independence in 1947. I told the Viceroy that I would like to pay my respects to Gandhiji, and asked him to arrange for me to visit him. He then told me that Gandhiji was staying with a sweeper (untouchable) but would gladly come to see me in New Delhi. What impressed me most about my short meeting was his complete and up-to-date knowledge of politics, not just in India but about what was going on in Parliament and in ministerial circles at home in London. I had expected to meet a saint, but such a politically-minded saint exceeded my expectations.

It was the combination of Gandhi and Nehru that made possible the transfer of power as early as August 1947. The agreement of Congress was of course essential, but Congress itself depended on the support of the masses. For this we have to thank the courage and self-sacrifice of Gandhiji. His belief in God as Truth, and in Truth as giving a moral law which forbade untouchability, the caste system and the inequality of women; and which insisted on non-violence as the only way in which society should remove these evils. The teaching of Gandhiji remains as relevant to the world's problems today as the teaching of all the great religious leaders. □

GANDHI, FREEDOM FIGHTER AND HUMANIST

Mochtar Lubis

I first met with Gandhiji during the first Asian Nations Conference in New Delhi after the end of the Second World War. I was then a young reporter for the Indonesian Antara News Agency. Indonesia had proclaimed its independence from Dutch colonialism, and our country was locked in a battle against the returning Dutch colonial government.

The revolutionary government of the Republic of Indonesia sent quite a big delegation to participate in the conference. I was lucky to be assigned by the Antara News Agency to join the Indonesian delegation. I took a train from Jakarta to Jogjakarta, and in the morning of our hazardous flight to Singapore, the pilot succeeded to elude Dutch air patrols.

We landed safely in Singapore and stayed there overnight. Being a slow plane with a restricted range it took us several days to reach New Delhi with stopovers in Bangkok and Rangoon.

But at last we arrived in New Delhi. The atmosphere of the conference was most exciting. There were many delegations from other Asian countries. At the opening ceremony the poetess, the "Nightingale of India", Sarojini Naidu read out her poem. She received a tremendous ovation. Nehru spoke. He received another tremendous ovation. Other leaders from other Asian nations including Sutan Syahrir from Indonesia made their speeches, and they were all showered with great ovations by the excited crowd.

Many in the audience were crying. Crying from happiness with new dreams and hopes for the new free Asian nations. I thought, we thought, that a new era was beginning for Asia. All the Asian nations would become free and independent, and our people at last, after centuries under foreign colonialism, would be enjoying freedom, a better life, and other happy things promised by the very word "freedom".

Then one morning Gandhi appeared. There was a hush among the great throng of Asian nations. That was also my first glimpse of Gandhi. He wore his usual hand-spun white cloth, slowly climbed on the podium, and sat down, his legs folded near the microphone, and started to speak. His voice was soft. He spoke calmly and unhurriedly, but everybody was spellbound. Today I no longer can remember word by word of what he said that day to the representatives of the Asian nations who came to New Delhi. But one thing I remember. That is the feeling and understanding he succeeded in planting in our hearts and minds, that we should all continue to struggle to regain our nations' independence, that Asian nations should unite and work together for a common purpose, not only for freedom, but also for justice for all peoples in Asia in all aspects of life.

I remember, after Gandhi stopped speaking, there was a hush among the audience, and then suddenly, as if by command, a tremendous applause and shouts of Gandhiji!, Gandhiji! exploded amidst the audience. What a splendid homage to a splendidly simple, wise and courageous man!

Gandhiji was not only highly respected by all the Asian delegates, but also loved by them. That was also my own personal reaction and response to the New Delhi "happening" long time ago.

Gandhi is not only highly respected, but also loved around the world.

Gandhi's book *My Experiments with the Truth* is one of the most impressive books I have ever read in my long life. I believe that the book must be read by everybody, who wants to really understand what things had shaped Gandhi from his early manhood, until he became what he was; a whole man, a complete man, completely honest with himself and with others, completely courageous, completely dedicating his life to the birth of a new humane society, not only in India, but in the whole world.

I say this because even today his books are still read by generations of human beings in many different countries.

Today when many technologists believe and preach that technology would be able to solve all earth and human problems, it would be good to reread and rethink Gandhi's teachings. Today we should not yield to the idea of "more of everything" which had been dominant in many industrialized nations at least during the last forty years. We have seen what has happened and is happening in such societies around the world; wasteful consumption, threats to the environment and to the ozone layers above both poles, destruction of forests around the world, and worldwide pollution, which degrade living conditions for all life forms and threaten them with extinction.

All policy-makers at local, national and international levels should read Gandhi's writings, because what he teaches is relevant for all times. □

GANDHI—AS CHINA KNEW HIM

Wang Shu Ying

Gandhi was a great revolutionary leader of contemporary India. He was an extraordinary social and religious reformer. Throughout his life, he struggled for the emancipation of India, and ultimately laid down his life for it. His memory still lives in our minds.

Gandhiji loved China. He felt concerned for her development. In principle, he supported the struggle being waged by China against Japan. That's why, the people of China cherish his memory as do the people of India.

I

Gandhi and Gandhian have become a part of Chinese psyche. The Chinese intellectuals had been talking of Mahatma Gandhi with great fervour ever since the first two decades of the 20th century. Before the advent of the Chinese Revolution, twenty years before it, to be precise, a variety of books appeared on Gandhi's autobiography, his thoughts and his activities. They were widely circulated. On an average, more than one book appeared in a year on some aspect of his life. These books included four translations of his autobiography. Besides, his representative work—*Indian Self-Rule*—also appeared in the Chinese language. A Chinese periodical of great importance—*Eastern Journal*—carried about seventy articles on a large variety of subjects pertaining to Gandhi. Some of them were —*Gandhi: The Pioneer of the Indian National Movement*; *What is Gandhism?* An abridged version of

Gandhi's *Autobiography; Non-Violent Revolution of India and Self-Rule Movement in India*. The periodical also brought out a special issue on 'Gandhi and Resurgence' even more books and articles appeared on Gandhi. Some universities initiated special study on him. All this amply bears out that Gandhi and Gandhism were almost at centrestage in China and had an important place in the Chinese thought.

II

When Gandhiji launched his famous Non-Cooperation Movement, it greatly attracted the attention of the Chinese people. For example, the *Eastern Journal* carried about twenty articles on this movement. Most of them were highly appreciative of Gandhi and Gandhism. Gandhi was presented as a thinker-leader, a great revolutionary, a social reformer and even a Raja of India. They were of the opinion that it was Gandhi whose driving force was behind the spiritual and material uplift of India. He was said to be representing the life-force and culture of the East, and was regarded as Tolstoy of India for his stand on truth and his opposition to violence. The letter write-ups, only some of them of course, were somewhat critical of him and showed their disagreement as they appreciate him. Those ones which appreciated him said that he blazed a new trail of non-violence to eliminate exploitation. They also called him pragmatic and hailed him for his unusual success. The detracting ones, on the contrary, averred that non-cooperation was not an all-time cure, it was only a short-term treatment and hence would flounder in the end without achieving the target.

There was still another approach. It studied the internal and external forces as it evaluated Gandhi and Gandhism. In one of the write-ups, Gandhi's attitude towards the British political system was analysed and its evaluation underlined. Another write-up viewed it in the background of Gandhi's thought process which encompassed religion, filial bonds and Western humanism. Still another write-up viewed Gandhi as a revolutionary and projected his political and social facts. It also said that the non-cooperation movement was a pragmatic approach for the economic upliftment of the society.

After the Chauri-Chaura catastrophe, Gandhiji decided to withdraw the non-cooperation movement. As soon as it was withdrawn, the colonial government arrested him and sentenced him

to six years' imprisonment. This gave a grave setback to the Indian National movement. The intellectuals of China felt greatly concerned over it and expressed their sympathy on the occasion. The newspapers and periodicals carried a good many articles about this happening and analysed the reasons which led to it. They also discussed the latest activities of Mahatma Gandhi and his line of thinking. They were all sympathy for the Indian national movement. The topic they dealt with was—Mahatma Gandhi: Leader of the Non-cooperation Movement: Scene After his Imprisonment. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, in many of his lectures on Gandhi and his anti-British campaign, upheld the cause of the Indian National Movement and expressed his happiness over its progress. About the non-cooperation movement, he said if the masses of China, like the masses of India, got united into a big national organisation and used non-cooperation and religious bodies as their weapon, they could not be suppressed by any means, may they be militaric or economic.

No doubt, the policy of solid struggle was somewhat different, but the freedom movements of both the countries were at their zenith and both the leaders—Gandhi and Sun Yat-sen—achieved their goals in their own ways.

III

After the liberation of China, the study of Gandhism was intensified in some universities, and much research was done on the history of the Indian national movement, especially in the light of the philosophy of Gandhi, his social thinking and his place in the Indian national movement, etc. But the outcome of this research was varied. The decade following 1980 can be taken up as watershed, since before and after it, wide-ranging difference is perceptible in the attitude of China. In the research conducted before 1980, Gandhi was projected as a soft-peddler against the British imperialism and colonialism, even a bourgeois leader representing the interests of the capitalist class. But the decade after 1980 established him as a leader of the petty business class. This view emerged after a total study of his thoughts and activities.

R. Aung Sachman, after having completed his research work, concluded that if the role of Mahatma Gandhi is studied in depth, the notion that he represented the feudal class and the landlords would be immediately falsified. Another scholar, Khasingta, toeing this line, has proved that Gandhi represented

the peasants and the small business community. Lutha-an-fang and Chang-Khaming, before they undertook to start this work, made a thorough study of the historical base of the policies adopted by Gandhi from time to time. They concluded that Gandhi hated capitalist culture and was a votary of simple and compassionate life. Wang ehhun Khowa analysed the religious and moral aspects of Gandhi's life and came to this conclusion that on the one hand the core of Gandhi's philosophy was non-violence and truth which did not go well with the interests of the capitalist class, on the other, his plan to make the village self-sufficient went totally against the capitalistic thinking. Thus, he truly represented the aspirations of an Indian peasant and a petty trader.

Gandhi's non-violent movement also invited various comments from the Chinese researchers. Fang Shu-te concentrated on 'The culmination of Gandhi's thoughts and their importance', and concluded that Gandhi drew upon the Indian tradition and cultural beliefs. As for his non-violent movement, he underscored three points—its unprecedented acceptance, its long-term continuation and its multi-facetedness. The main plan was of course, general strike. This movement roused the national consciousness and led to the development of the Indian independence movement in an unforeseen way. Therefore, these scholars were of the view that though basically Gandhism had its roots in the bourgeois thinking, it did not lose sight of the interest of the down-and-out people. Even it reflected their religious orientation.

As we evaluate Gandhi's thought-process and the independence movement that he set rolling, it may be worthwhile to have a look at the outcome of the world-wide anti-imperialism struggle. If we see it from the view-point of Indian independence and the general demand for it, it looks forward-looking and progressive and even linked with India's valuable national heritage. Li-ta-can is right when he says that Gandhi applied himself full to save India, he even laid down his life for it.

If we make an exhaustive study of the Indian national movement, we would certainly come to the conclusion that Gandhiji raised the national flag higher, stood firm against the British, played a historic role in countering British imperialism and by non-violent means. Therefore, we cannot but conclude that Gandhi's thinking and his programmes were progressive, and that they were nothing short of it. Even Chang-e-fing has testified that Gandhi's non-violent movement was essentially anti-imperialistic and anti-colonial. It strengthened the Indian national

movement and propelled it towards victory.

Wang-Shu-Lee made a study of the outstanding qualities of Gandhiji and was of the opinion that there was no element of selfishness in his approach to the national movement. Rather, his humility, truthfulness, patriotism and dedication, all contributed their bit in its evolution. It can also be said that Gandhi's personality left its mark not only on India, but also on some countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America—all those countries which were struggling against imperialism.

IV

The Chinese people are well aware that Gandhiji stood by China in her most difficult period. His support was both, moral and material. It is still fresh in their minds and they feel beholden for it. The Indian people have also remained in their minds as they had been before the 1919 movement of freedom.

In 1949, when the new China came into being, Gandhiji came still nearer the Chinese people. Many articles and books appeared on him. In a way, the Chinese people came to know the Indian people still better. Today it appears all the more necessary that Mahatma Gandhi is remembered. This will strengthen the traditional bonds between the two countries and make the future of their friendship bright. □

(Translated from Chinese)

CZECH MEMORIES OF THE MAHATMA

Miloslav Krása

The evening of January 30 has come, cool and tranquil, with the sky full of stars—an evening which probably nothing whatsoever will be able to erase from the memory of India. Our lane looks as if petrified. Only here and there people wrapped in shawls and blankets emerge from their homes and silently join the crowd gathered around the loudspeaker hanging over a small shop—The Students Tea Room. Nobody is talking, no words are needed, all of them know already. From a side-street a heavy ox-cart comes in rattling and the cartman shouts at the crowd to clear the way. Dead silence answers him and its impact makes his voice falter out. Somebody gets up and walks to him, and their subdued talk suddenly reveals the whole gravity of today's evening. The news which a few moments ago hit the hearts of millions as a lightning, could hardly be worse. Gandhi...

Tears, helplessness and a feeling of emptiness. The air is heavy, full of dust and smoke that keep close to the ground in the calm. A little later the wailing sounds of mourning song can be heard. Songs for him who is dead. Female voices are released by the old loudspeaker to express sorrow and desolation which are being shared by everybody. They are still lacking their soothing balm-like effect—the wound is still too sore. A speech by the Prime Minister has been announced. All are waiting now to hear the voice of the only man who today can tell them something, who *must* tell them something. Finally the silence is interrupted by the first words by Pandit Nehru. His broken voice betrays his deep emotion; he, too,

has been overwhelmed by pain, as have all the others. 'Friends, comrades...light has departed from our lives and darkness has spread all around us. What can I tell you... and how...' He, too, needs to recover from the shock of the sudden loss. He goes on speaking and one can feel how he himself is seeking reinforcement through this connection with others. He can hardly offer a consolation to anybody, but he says what all are feeling and experiencing and what amounts to a boundless ocean of commonly-shared sorrow.

These are some reminiscences of that tragic event as I put them down in my diary. I was then studying Indian history at the Allahabad University and the tea room was quite near, behind the campus. Allahabad was also the place where we paid our last homage to Gandhi when his ashes were immersed in the waves of the Jamuna and the Ganges at the holy Triveni Sangam. The area was then overcrowded with pilgrims from every corner of India, as it was the time of Ardh Kumbh Mela. The procession and the ceremony on the shore, at which Jawaharlal Nehru delivered a passionate speech proclaiming his adherence to the Mahatma's legacy and condemning communal hatred, acquired from this colourful presence of Indian masses an obvious symbolic significance.

Five months earlier, I had witnessed Gandhi's miracle of stopping Hindu-Muslim animosity in Calcutta just before Independence day, and still earlier in Delhi—it was July 1947—Gandhi had invited me for an evening stroll after his usual prayer meeting, which I attended along with friends—two other Czechoslovak students. The political situation then was tense with the approaching historical changes in India, yet the atmosphere of the meeting, held below a sky filled with shining stars, was unforgettably relaxed and tinged with good humour, so that we all felt completely at ease. Gandhi's concern over contemporary happenings in our country as well as about our interest and programme in India was evidently spontaneous and sincere. He had never actually visited central Europe, but he was well aware of the general conditions there, especially the fate of democratic Czechoslovakia after the Munich crisis. Its occupation by Nazi Germany was still firmly in his mind. During that time he had often dealt with these tragic events in his own writings and admitted once that he had been affected by the plight of the Czechs, to the point of physical and mental distress.

Among the Czech people, Gandhi had for a long time been very popular both as a thinker and as a symbol of India's non-violent

struggle for freedom. His *Autobiography* and *Niti Dharma* were published in Czech in the twenties and early thirties, as were the biographies of him by Romain Rolland and Moriz Winternitz, besides lesser publications and various articles. Minute descriptions and analyses of Gandhi's political activities were periodically written by Indologists Vincenc Lesný and Otakar Pertold. The latter, as the first Czechoslovak Consul in Bombay during the period from 1921 to 1923, used to send regular reports on the economic and political situation in India, including the non-cooperation movement for Swaraj led by Gandhi in those turbulent years.

Professor Pertold visited India for study purposes in 1909–1910, and when he served as Consul he spent every spare moment of his time to travel and continue with his field research among the Adivasis. From the pen of his wife Anna we thus have the very first account of their casual *darshan* of Mahatma Gandhi which appeared in the Prague journal *Sirým světem* in 1928:

So once in the autumn, on finding out that there were three holidays ahead, after office hours were over we quickly prepared the necessary bedding without which Europeans cannot travel, and by 9 o'clock the coolie in the railway coach had prepared our sleeping berth in a double compartment. In the meantime as we were walking along the platform we saw in front of a carriage a group of well dressed Indians, looking with esteem through the window and every now and then greeting the noble personage within with a bow and folded hands.

Some brought him the flowers and garlands which are given to a respected and beloved person as an adornment for his neck at the time of parting. We learned that the man inside the carriage was Gandhi, the leader of the Indian patriots. Gandhi is an idealist. He studied in Bombay and then in London...

A short characterization followed of Gandhi's life and programme, of satyagraha and his social reform. Sabarmati Ashram, his home at the time and its industrious atmosphere, were also mentioned. No doubt, early accounts of Gandhi's views and his unusual political methods were at first received with perhaps more curiosity and surprise than real understanding. However, by the end of the twenties the universal human aspects of his message started to inspire more and more people and were gaining wider comprehension and sympathy.

This is evident from the recollections of the eminent Czech theologian and humanist J.L. Hromádka, who spent a few days with Gandhi in Sabarmati Ashram in January 1929. He had gone

to India to attend the world committee meeting of the Christian Student Federation in Madras. He was fascinated by the all-round authority commanded by the Mahatma among all strata of the Indian people and decided to try to meet in person the man who reminded him of St. Francis of Assisi and the Russian spiritual giants and whose aspirations were so near to those of L.N. Tolstoy and the Czech mediaeval thinker Peter Chelčický.

Hromádka wrote later:

We were objectively critical of him, and yet we anticipated in him a personality manifesting a deep humanity and an unfettered dignity, in both his personal and political life.

Gandhi invited him to his Ashram and the impressions of his visit and conversations with the Mahatma are preserved in a letter he instantly wrote to his wife. The following ideas are typical of his estimate of Gandhi's personality:

Modern India is unthinkable without this remarkable man. Sometimes it is asserted that India was united by the British colonial power. But the question is not only one of the outward unity. What matters is that innermost unity which cannot be created by any means of power, political, organizational or technical. Perhaps Mahatma Gandhi represents the utopian desires of men, those that cannot be ever realized and which are sometimes, perhaps, even politically dangerous. And yet, those are longings without which human life would be poor and empty. A real politician should always think beyond the boundaries of ordinary political practice, look towards what genuinely unites the human community and gives it a true profundity. Everybody who knows but a little of today's India is bound to ask the question: Has Gandhi failed? There are many indications that this is so. And yet India, with all the difficulties, is unimaginable without him. Gandhi remains as a beacon, the hope of India and the rest of mankind. One has to see him from the perspective of the future.

Professor Hromádka retained his admiration for Gandhi ever after. He lived to see India a free country, mighty and peaceful, and was eighty when he spoke at the closing ceremony of the Prague celebrations of Gandhi's centenary in 1969.

Another Czech scholar who was attracted by the life and teachings of Gandhi was the astronomer-cum-philosopher Karel Hujer. In summer 1935 he stayed as a guest of Dr. Ansari in his house in Delhi, where he also addressed a Congress audience, presided over by Rajendra Prasad, on "The problem of Small Nations". Gandhi was then occupied with his village uplift programme and had his temporary ashram in the countryside not

far from Delhi. Sarojini Naidu arranged a two-day visit there in August for Prof. Hujer. It proved to be a fateful event in his life.

I shall never forget that moment, he wrote in Czech daily *Lidové noviny*, and not even the best attempt to describe it would satisfy me. I realized that even if everything failed, in this small episode my journey to the East had found its fulfilment. I felt competent to convey to Gandhi the greetings of Czechoslovak friends, which he accepted with an amiable smile. Further I conveyed to him and to Miraben greetings from Romain Rolland and from Mrs Flammarion of France. In the following conversation about Flammarion the Mahatma described how he was affected by the works of the French astronomer when he read them in prison. We had an interesting discussion on trends in contemporary science and the relevance of astronomy.

Disturbed by the calamitous effects of the world economic crisis and disappointed by the negative social symptoms of the over-technologised and sophisticated Western civilization, Prof. Hujer whole-heartedly admired the unassuming democratic leader who on his *charkha* was spinning the fibre of a self-sustaining village life as the most reliable way to achieve satisfaction and human happiness.

The Mahatma! What a rare phenomenon in our times. He is silent and humble, yet so firm and unyielding from a recognized truth... In his proximity I feel how ravishing is his spiritual beauty and power, especially when I realize that he, who could have the treasures of this world at his feet, is poor, very simple, taking only a morsel of food each day. What a magnificent example in today's age of materialism and cheap corruption. He personifies the strength and power of India which in him give the world a great leader, the guru... Gandhi's spinning-wheel, khadi, fasting—these may only be the outward and eventually sensational attributes which the world simply fails to grasp, but which cannot escape our attention if we want to identify the genius, the leading light of the present time.

Hujer left his country before the Nazi occupation for the USA where he settled and lectured. He considered himself Gandhi's spiritual disciple, and in December 1949 participated in convening a World Pacifist Meeting which had its first session in Santiniketan and a second in Sevagram in Wardha.

It seems that the last occasion when Gandhi met anybody from Czechoslovakia was in 1947. The impressions of this encounter were soon after published in the Czech newspaper *Svobodné noviny* in Prague, by one of its participants, Jiří

Nehněvajsa, later Professor of sociology at the University of Pittsburgh. His fresh account and reflections truly echoed what we felt that evening and its mood:

This is Gandhi. The man with whom so many millions fell in love because he never ceased to be a human being. Because his policy is called humanity and his passion is named reason. The man whose name is the natural response to the word: India...He wants to know something about Czechoslovakia and his interest is not formal as of somebody who receives one visit after another. It is an embodied interest of India which sensitively passes through social rebirth and prepares for a political transformation with far-reaching social consequences. He is interested in the Germans; he would like to know how many of them have been transferred from Czechoslovakia and whether any remained at all. He nods his head with satisfaction when he finds out that the loyal Germans remained and live as Czechoslovak citizens, and a brief smile lickers across his face when he is then assured that there were not too many of such people... My hand rests in his for a while. It is a small wrinkled hand with a white palm and pale fingers. The handshake is firm, manlike. This hand which in the darkness can be just as well the hand of a boy as of an old man, was the hand which for many years held the destiny of a great country. In it lies the heart of millions, their hopes, their dreams, their prayers, their future.

Sadly, Prof. Nehněvajsa returned to our evening stroll with the Mahatma once more—after Gandhi's assassination in his obituary essay in the same daily paper. Expressing the shocked, painful surprise and sorrow of his compatriots he wrote:

...it would be difficult to find anywhere on the earth a man so animated by a sense of justice, so truly modest, so mystically simple. It would be hard to find even if one set out on a meandering journey in search of it, such love of the world and its peoples, such faith in society, such a belief in humanity which is above religious communities, parties, states and perhaps even above worlds.

To say something about Gandhi's relation to Czechoslovakia is to recall Masaryk. Against their different social backgrounds they appear in silhouette as two world famous, gentle but formidable humanists of the new age. Masaryk and Gandhi. It was perhaps just this chord of common philosophy, with an inner design of elements drawn from their diverse social milieus, which brought the two men together. And which, as Gandhi stood last year in July with three Czechoslovak students under the high starry sky of his India, brought to his lips an anxious question about whether the Czechoslovakia of that day was Masaryk's Czechoslovakia.

On the pages of the same issue of the newspaper, Lubor

Hájek—today a well-known connoisseur of Indian and Oriental art, then representing the youngest generation of Czech Indologists—joined his senior Prof. Lesný, in denouncing the inhuman crime and paying tribute to the memory of the great son of India:

If we are today so distraught by the news of Gandhi's death, we in Prague, like millions in Bombay, London, Paris, Moscow and New York, it is because this symbol of humanism, non-violence, tolerance and freedom was felled by a stroke of violence, hatred and cruelty. And when we take pen in hand, it is in a common effort, to ensure that by this stroke Gandhi was not defeated, that his idea was not defeated and that his humanity cannot be ended by a bullet. Truth is God, Gandhi once said, and Truth cannot be found without non-violence, or better, it can be found only through non-violence.

India and the world felt suddenly poorer without Mahatma Gandhi but his message did not lose its relevance only because he became a part of history. Just the opposite proved true. The Czechs, with their tradition of John Huss, Peter Chelčický and Jan Amos Comenius, were certainly not among those who failed to understand his message. □

THE GREAT SOUL OF INDIA

H. B. Mschindo

People praise their heroes making use of well-chosen words, using some kind of measure for greatness. But how can one praise Gandhiji and measure him now, one hundred and twenty-five years after his birthday! For he has had greater praise in his lifetime than most living men in history. He has been living in the hearts of millions and he will continue to live for immemorial ages. Our commemoration of his hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary is just a token demonstration of our recognition of his efforts in the liberation of mankind.

India gave birth to Mahatma Gandhi, a mighty leader who shone like the sun not only for his country but for the whole world. His inspiration for liberation sparked in South Africa, Europe, America and even in Japan. The inception of satyagraha in South Africa was not specifically meant to help Indians alone, but it was for all the coloureds who were humiliated by the laws of apartheid enacted by Boers with the support of their colonial masters, the British. Frankly speaking, Gandhiji suffered a lot for the liberalization of the coloured in South Africa, many years before the dawn of freedom struggle in India. It is Gandhiji who awakened the consciousness of the coloured in South Africa regarding the racial laws banning the Asian immigrants in South Africa, requiring all Indians to register with the authority and to carry a certificate at all times, imposing a three pound annual tax on each indentured labourer who remained in South Africa and holding marriages other than those of Christians to be illegal. For

his stand against oppression of the coloured by the whites in South Africa, Gandhiji was condemned to ridicule, physical assault and later to imprisonment. Despite all that Gandhiji remained undaunted and continued his struggle to his last breath.

He brought people to freedom and the world marvelled at the way he did it. Throughout his life he thought of the world in terms of the poor and the oppressed and the down-trodden. To raise them and free them was the mission of his life. Victory to him was the growth of freedom of these people who knew him well enough to realize that Gandhi was great, unique and a glorious leader, and who having put their faith in him, gave him an almost blank cheque of their confidence reserves. As a symbol of reverence to him his people entitled him Mahatma and qualified him as Gandhiji or Bapu.

What kind of freedom did Gandhiji wish for the people? He did not aspire for the triumph for which most people strive through violence, fraud, treachery and evil means. Because he believed that victory so acquired was not stable. For him the foundations of lasting freedom could only be laid on the rock of truth. Gandhiji lived and died for all—every man, woman and child. He lived working unceasingly and died a martyr's death. His sole craving was that man should turn from the evil path of hatred, greed, black-marketing, corruption, favouritism, jealousy, rivalry and a host of other dark manifestations of untruth and violence. For him true freedom was purification from all kinds of physical and moral evils.

Gandhiji is gone, but Gandhiji should live in the hearts of men for ever. Indeed Gandhiji was a pillar of strong will and a source of inspiration to the mankind. And indeed for his physical death the world has suffered an irreparable loss. But his spiritual life makes him immortal and the world should adhere to it as its model. Surely Gandhiji's supreme sacrifice evoked a higher response in the heart of every man. The light that illuminated the world during Gandhiji's lifetime should illumine the world for many more years; and centuries to come that light should still be seen in this world and it should give solace to innumerable hearts.

Today the world is in turmoil. The international war-mongers are at the forefront in annihilating the weaker populace of the developing nations. On the other hand, civil strifes claiming lives of millions of innocent citizens are rampant. All this happens under pretext of searching for democracy and freedom. It is imperative that man should go back to the teachings of Gandhiji. He warned

the world against communal poison which could bring disaster upon man and put an end to man's freedom if man was not vigilant and if action was not taken in time. He often reminded man that democracy demands discipline, tolerance and mutual regard; that in a democracy changes are made by mutual discussion and persuasion and not by violent means; and that freedom of a person demands respect for the freedom of others.

If only man could turn to the spiritual teachings of the beloved Gandhiji peace would reign in our era. The present global violent situation needs to be tackled with a firm will and unfaltering hand, just as Gandhiji fought relentlessly with evil. So that man can fight the evil without, he should a priori master the evil within. Hence the world should stand united and bravely face the international disaster that has overtaken man. This is only possible if the world pledges itself to Gandhiji's teaching and ideals.

It is therefore the duty of man to fight this poison of hatred and ill will among mankind. If one has learned anything from Gandhiji, one must bear no ill will or enmity towards any person. If we are to serve Mahatma's sacred cause we are to pledge ourselves anew to work, to sacrifice and thus prove to a certain extent at least that we are worthy disciples of his. We are to strive for the same ideals and in the same manner. Only then shall we be worthy of saying heartily "*Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai*" □

GANDHI

Lord Bottomley

My first contact with Mahatma Gandhi was in 1931 when he attended the Indian Round Table Conference. He stayed with Muriel Lester in the East End of London at Kingsley Hall. I was taken by the Rev. Reginald Sorensen, one of the first Members of Parliament to raise the question of Indian independence in the British House of Commons. It was there I met a medical student, Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, who became the Prime Minister of an independent Mauritius. A few years ago he invited my wife and me to be his guests at his home in Mauritius when we talked about the occasion. My second meeting with Mahatma Gandhi was in 1946 in Madras. The Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, who played a leading part in the 1929 Labour Government, had been sent on a mission by the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, to say that Britain intended to establish an independent India. Subsequently, when Clement Attlee became Prime Minister in 1945, he appointed me with others (which included the Rev. Reginald Sorensen) to join a British Parliamentary Delegation to India. He let it be known that his Government intended to press ahead with Indian independence. One of our first meetings was with Mahatma Gandhi in Madras. He had with him a young man named Sudhir Ghosh with whom I established a friendship which lasted until his death. I still keep in touch with his family and his wife has stayed at our home. He accompanied our mission to report back to Gandhi how things were going. During our prolonged meeting with the Mahatma, our leader, Robert Richards,

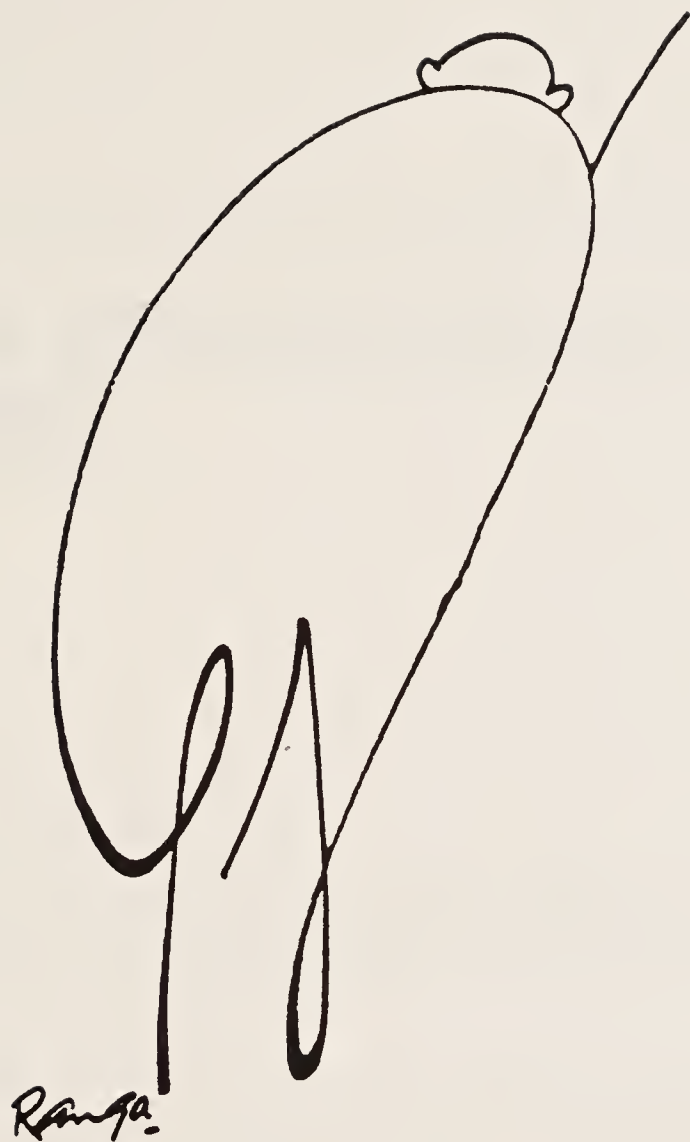
M.P. had a temporary lapse in which he said, "Mr. Jinnah" instead of "Mr. Gandhi". Gandhi laughed heartily and said, "I am flattered". Whether Richards did this to call an end to the meeting I do not know, but it had that effect.

The influence of Gandhi in the world of today is very much missed. His non-violence movement and the movement for non-cooperation, his fasting to bring about the end of the religious taboo of untouchability are weapons which could be used in the troubled world of today.

For twenty-one years I paired with a Conservative Member of Parliament, Sir Paul Bryan, an arrangement which ended when I left the House of Commons. He said that to celebrate our long association he would like to give me a dinner and to take me to see the film *Gandhi* which was then being shown at the Odeon Cinema in London. He asked me whether I thought the film was a good portrayal of Gandhi and whether he was a saint and a great man. I told him there was no doubt about his being a great man, but I had reservation about him being a saint. When we met in Madras in 1946 he said that he never read the newspapers, but he did not tell me that other people read them to him—hardly the truthfulness of a saint!

But it would be good for us all to remember Gandhi's wise words: "I sought my soul, but my soul I did not see. I sought my God, but God eluded me. I sought my brother and I found all three."

□



Understanding Gandhi

MODERN CIVILIZATION AND GANDHISM

Daisaku Ikeda

Shakyamuni and Gandhi

I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and Non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on as vast a scale as I could do.¹

Commenting on Gandhi's statement, noted peace scholar Sissela Bok has written: "Kant would have agreed with Gandhi. There is nothing new either in stressing truth and non-violence or in the corresponding constraints on deceit and violence, for these two are as old as the hills."²

Two millennia and several centuries ago, Shakyamuni, who attained enlightenment beneath the bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, offered the following instruction to his disciples in the Jetavana Monastery near Sravasti. "Bhikkhus, it is just as if a person wandering through the jungle, the great forest, should see an ancient path, travelled along by men of former times. And as if he should go along it and going along it should see an ancient town and ancient royal city, inhabited by men of former times, having parks, groves, ponds and walls—a delightful place."³

What Shakyamuni refers to as an ancient path or road is the eternal Dharma that permeates all life and the universe. Awakened to this fundamental law of the universe, Shakyamuni manifested the supreme life state of Buddha, and embarked on his life-long

endeavour of travel and instruction to save people from suffering. This Dharma was not dependent on Shakyamuni's advent, but rather is the eternal principle of the sanctity of life which is inherent in the universe.

In the early years of this century, Mahatma Gandhi expressed this law as the truth (*satya*) and chose non-violence as the essential means by which to achieve peace.

According to Gandhi, non-violence (*ahimsa*) and the attainment of truth (*satyagraha*) are inseparable manifestations of the same essence. Because the truth which we attain through the resolute practice of non-violence is an eternal truth; it represents true wisdom. The joy derived therefrom is likewise eternal. Gandhi recognized that this truth is something which exists equally and without discrimination in the lives of all people. Drawing forth this eternal joy and true wisdom, he placed himself in the midst of the suffering masses, and devoted himself to the cause of non-violent struggle.

There are striking parallels here with Shakyamuni and his disciples, born of this same Indian soil, who pursued this Dharma or *Satya*, and who sought to demonstrate a pattern of ethical human behaviour, through the constraint of violence and falsehood in their movement to save all people from unhappiness. In the *Lotus Sutra*, there is a scene which describes how Shariputra and the other disciples 'danced for joy'⁴ at having at last encountered the eternal Dharma.

A number of prominent figures have commented on the profound connection between Gandhi and Shakyamuni, one that transcends the great span of time that separates them. B.N. Pande, one of Gandhi's closest disciples, had stated that Gandhi practised the message of Shakyamuni. Likewise, former President Ramaswamy Venkataraman, states that Gandhi's thought was formed by the thinking of Shakyamuni, which emerged from the great earth of India. In a speech, President Shankar Dayal Sharma has quoted Gandhi as saying, "I have the greatest veneration for the Buddha. He is one of the greatest preachers of peace."⁵

Further, during his November 1985 visit to Japan, Rajiv Gandhi addressed the Japanese Diet, expressing his positive appraisal of Buddhism, the shared spiritual heritage of both India and Japan.

Let us remove the mental partitions which obstruct the ennobling vision of the human family linked together in peace and prosperity.

The Buddha's message of compassion is the very condition of human survival in our age. ...Buddhism proclaims the greatest conquest as the conquest of the self. Through the ages, millions in your country and ours have sought to live up to this precept. The ideals of *Dharma* have lit our path. ...One-in-many and many-in-one has been the essence of our philosophy of life. Our ancients said, "truth is one—but the wise know it differently." We accept and respect differences. Tolerance is the hallmark of the Indian outlook. The mission of the Buddha and the life work of Ashoka, Akbar, Gandhi and Nehru enriched this tradition of tolerance.⁶

President Sharma and Rajiv Gandhi rightly noted that in its essence Buddhism is a teaching of compassion and love, and the spirit of tolerance contained therein.

The spirit of tolerance is based on a wisdom which emanates from the profound insight of the *Dharma*. Buddhism refers to this as the wisdom of dependent origination, the wisdom to perceive the truth that all things in the universe are interdependent and interrelated, that they interact and reach fulfillment within a delicate and mysterious harmony of diversity. The eternal and universal *Dharma* lives within all things, forming the phenomenal world with its dynamic harmonization in interdependence and interrelationship. This, the true aspect of phenomena, is expressed as dependent origination.

When awakened to the wisdom of dependent origination, people can break the bonds of egoism, rising above the narrow confines of a closed perspective, developing a spirit of tolerance open to all humankind and to the entire universe. The concrete manifestation of this spirit of tolerance is the practice of compassion and love. Thus, dependent origination and compassion together form an indivisible whole.

The essence of Shakyamuni's enlightenment is the wisdom of dependent origination, which makes possible tolerance, and action based on compassion, born of a passionate desire to work for people's salvation. The wisdom of dependent origination is closely related to the wisdom of *satya*; and the practice of compassion is profoundly linked to non-violence (*ahimsa*).

These qualities which were formed in the rich traditions of India, the spiritual superpower, are the essence of Indian spirituality and can offer a source of illumination to dispel the darkness which envelops modern civilization, and to serve as a beacon for the human future.

The Triumphs and Failures of Modern Civilization

Compared with other traditional civilizations, such as that of India or Japan, the prominent feature of modern civilization has been the central place occupied by scientific thinking, which has made such remarkable advances since the seventeenth century.

Reductionism using a binary analytic method has proven enormously effective in elucidating the physical world, giving rise to a mechanistic understanding of the world. The scope of modern science and technology extends from the vastness of the cosmos to the world of subatomic particles.

The scientific method has also been directed to the examination of life itself. Man has discovered the structure of DNA, giving rise to new fields such as genetic engineering and biotechnology, probing the secrets of life itself. Further, science has advanced to encompass the brain, creating a new science that is even encroaching on the workings of consciousness and the human spirit. The great strides of science and technology have made possible an affluent material civilization, greatly reducing poverty within the advanced industrial countries, extending average life expectancy in those prosperous consumer societies.

Further, the development of communications, information and transportation technologies, has brought about what Arnold Toynbee termed the "annihilation of distance", resulting in a downplaying of the practical significance of national boundaries. We are witnessing the ever increasing interdependence of the global economy; politically, no country can maintain its isolation. Finally, the advances of science and technology have enabled manned space flight, and through the experience of astronauts and cosmonauts, we have all been awakened to a new awareness of the universe and of our living planet.

I find it of great interest that the mystical experiences of the astronauts should give birth to a sense of the cosmos that corresponds so closely with Indian religious experience, in particular that of Buddhism. This is the global awareness that humanity shares this planet as a family, and of the underlying unity of all living things. Seen from space, our Earth is not divided by national borders, but is indeed a single living organism, "Gaia" in the contemporary terminology.

If the above are the triumphs of modern scientific civilization, the greatest single failure must be the development of nuclear weapons and the resultant threat of nuclear war, for these are

satanic weapons which present the grim possibility of the extinction of the human species. Even though the end of the Cold War has lessened the threat of such an eventuality, it has yet to be eliminated altogether.

The second failure of material civilization, with its unbridled mechanical prowess, is the increasing disparity between poverty and wealth, something clearly understood and foreseen by Gandhi. On a global scale, this takes the form of the North-South development gap, the growing income differential between the advanced industrial countries and the developing world.

The third point I would mention is the global crisis of environmental destruction. The disruption and destruction of the natural ecology threatens to make of the Earth a dead planet.

Finally, there is the weakening and impoverishment of the human spirit itself, the loss of human vitality and the concurrent moral and ethical crisis. We see evidence of this everywhere in the increasing prevalence of all forms of mental illness, neurosis and psychosomatic disease. Further, advances in medicine and biology have in themselves brought to the fore a wide range of new ethical problems, from the question of brain death, death with dignity, to artificial and ex-utero insemination. Ominously, the misuse of genetic engineering could bring about the extinction of the entire human species.

‘Already, humanity is facing the crisis situation which Arnold Toynbee warned of in 1973.

Will mankind murder Mother Earth or will he redeem her? He could murder her by misusing his increasing technological potency. Alternatively he could redeem her by overcoming the suicidal, aggressive greed that, in all living creatures, including Man himself, has been the price of the Great Mother’s gift of life. This is the enigmatic question which now confronts Man.⁷

The Transformative Power of the Indian Spiritual Tradition

The profound spiritual traditions and insights of India are, I believe, richly endowed with the power to counteract and undo the failures of modern scientific and technological civilization, and to bring a healing to the soul of humankind.

Some six months after the atomic bombing of Japan, Gandhi wrote an article for *Harijan* entitled “Atomic Warfare”.

There have been cataclysmic changes in the world. Do I still adhere

to my faith in truth and non-violence? Has not the atom bomb exploded that faith? Not only has it not done so but it has clearly demonstrated to me that the twins constitute the mightiest force in the world. Before it the atom bomb is of no effect. The two opposing forces are wholly different in kind, the one moral and spiritual, the other physical and material.⁸

Gandhi marshalled the forces of truth and non-violence, the power of the human spirit, in challenging the forces of materialism. Jawaharlal Nehru expressed a similar absence of fear with regard to nuclear weapons.

Nehru's peace diplomacy based on the "Panchsheel", which includes nonaligned neutrality and peaceful coexistence, as well as his call for the nuclear disarmament, were expressions on a global scale of Gandhi's philosophy of peace.

Addressing the United Nations General Assembly in 1960, Nehru adumbrated this stance.

For, as everyone knows, the choice today in this nuclear age is one of utter annihilation and destruction of civilization or of some way to have peaceful coexistence between nations. There is no middle way. If war is an abomination and an ultimate crime which have to be avoided, we must fashion our minds and policies accordingly. There may be risks, but the greatest risk is to allow the present dangerous drift to continue. In order to achieve peace we have to develop a climate of peace and tolerance and to avoid speech and action which tend to increase fear and hatred.⁹

Heir to the spirit of Nehru, Rajiv Gandhi developed a plan for a new world order as a means of rebuilding human civilization on a basis of non-violence. This plan, centred on the three pillars of peaceful coexistence, North-South economic cooperation, and global environmental security, offered concrete suggestions for strengthening the capacities of the United Nations in each of these areas. His proposals for nuclear disarmament asserted that the final goal must be the complete elimination of these genocidal weapons from the face of the Earth.

Nehru concluded his address to the General Assembly with the following words:

I am equally convinced that if we aim at right ends, right means must be employed. Good will not emerge out of evil methods. That was the lesson which our great leader Gandhi taught us, and though we in India have failed in many ways in following his advice, something of his message still clings to our minds and hearts. In ages long past a great son of India, the Buddha, said that the only real victory was the one in which all were equally victorious and

there was defeat for no one. In the world today that is the only practical victory. Any other way will lead to disaster.

It is, therefore, this real victory of peace in which all are winners that I would like this great Assembly to keep before its mind and to endeavour to achieve.¹⁰

The good which Gandhi demonstrated was truth, and the only means by which it could be grasped is right means, or non-violence, as opposed to the evil methods of violence. This is the same spiritual force which Shakyamuni expressed in his admonitions against the taking of life, and for the practice of compassion. It is for this reason that Nehru quotes Shakyamuni's assertion that a true victory is that in which all people are victorious.

With regard to the widening gap between rich and poor caused by mechanization based on science and technology, Gandhi suggests means by which this can be overcome in a dialogue with the young student, Ramachandran.

"Then, Bapuji," said Ramachandran with eagerness, "you are fighting not against machinery as such, but against its abuses which are so much in evidence today?"

"I would unhesitatingly say 'yes'; but I would add that scientific truths and discoveries should first of all cease to be the mere instruments of greed. Then labourers will not be overworked and machinery instead of becoming a hindrance will be a help. ... Therefore, replace greed by love and everything will come outright."¹¹

Human greed, exacerbated by the civilization of materialism, has created a society of rampant consumption. This has resulted in the unbridled exploitation of the resources and energy of the southern hemisphere, driving its inhabitants into deeper poverty. This same greed is at the root of the third problem I mentioned, the ecological destruction that threatens the continued existence of humanity and other living things on Earth.

Developing a positive and symbiotic relationship with the natural ecology is essential to the human future. In order to correct the failures of contemporary civilization, we must develop the spirit of tolerance, which acknowledges other existences, and seeks a thriving coexistence with others. The teaching of dependent origination provides a profound and solid conceptual framework for tolerance. Referring to India's historical experience, Mr. Ravinder Kumar, curator of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, suggests means in which this can be brought to bear on the question of tolerance. As a country which since ancient times has comprised a great diversity of languages, peoples, cultures and

religion, the question of how to establish mutual understanding and foster acceptance has long been at the forefront of Indian consciousness, necessitating a philosophy of wisdom and compassion.

The wisdom of dependent origination shows us that all existences are interrelated and interdependent. Therefore, although we may differ in race or religion, we must, as human beings sharing this same planet Earth, and as living organisms, cooperate and aid one another as we live our lives. Action based on this wisdom naturally manifests compassion.

Why does the law of dependent origination urge us to seek harmony, to aid one another through compassionate action? This is because it perceives all existence as the manifestation of the eternal truth. The truth to which Gandhi refers, and the eternal Dharma to which Shakyamuni points in the Lotus Sutra, are both based on the same perception of the ultimate law of the universe. Thus, the quest for truth which Gandhi sought as the most humane way of life through the practice of non-violence, and the bodhisattva way (bodhisattva-carya) of Mahayana Buddhism are both the ultimate path of human life, based on the same eternal essence. And it is in this process that human goodness is developed, our ethical qualities enhanced, and the power of the spirit strengthened.

The spirit of the person who lives dedicated to the ideal of "satyagraha" and of the person who seeks to perfect the bodhisattva-carya, sees humanity in its unity, as a mutually aiding family, and further feels a sense of identification with all living things. The inner stature of such a person expands from an awareness of humanity on Earth, to one of the entire cosmos. Through such a revolution of consciousness, we will see the emergence of a truly global citizenry for the first time in human history. Such a cosmopolitanism, with its awareness of our planet and of the cosmos, keenly perceptive of the fundamental equality of all humanity, represents an encounter with the eternal Dharma, the eternal Buddha.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, we find the eternal and cosmic existence described in the following terms: "Though I am unborn and of changeless self, though I am Lord of beings, having taken my stand over my own nature, I am born by my own self's power (māyā)." ¹²

In the *Lotus Sutra*, in which Shakyamuni set down in words his own enlightenment, we find the teaching of the appearance

of an eternal, cosmic and ultimate law within the lives of those who selflessly dedicate themselves to the way of the bodhisattva.

All harbour thoughts of yearning
and in their minds thirst to gaze at me.
When living beings have become truly faithful,
honest and upright, gentle in intent,
single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha.
not hesitating even if it costs them their lives,
then I and the assembly of monks
appear together on Holy Eagle Peak.¹³

Drawing on the philosophical wellsprings of the teachings of Shakyamuni, Gandhi and Nehru in the early years of this century engaged in unparalleled actions through which they put into practice and made known to the world the philosophy of non-violence and compassion. This year, just one hundred years after Gandhi established the Natal Indian Congress in South Africa as a vehicle for the struggle for human rights, Nelson Mandela, whose respect for Gandhi is well known, was elected as the First Black President of that country. Here also, we see the rich harvest born of Gandhian thought over the course of these one hundred years. This same rich source of inspiration has also been communicated to Japan, and today, the spirit of India finds expression in the Soka Gakkai International's activities for peace, culture and education based on the philosophy of Buddhism. Thus the spirit of India is reaching out to the world, healing the wounded soul of humankind.

Since the days of Shakyamuni, India, the great land of spirituality, has brought forth the pure and constant stream of non-violence and compassion based on the eternal Dharma, enriching the lives of her people. Now this same flow of compassion is reaching out to the entire world.

The "Indian Way," which Arnold Toynbee foretold, is the the great path of planetary redemption. Now on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, I would like to offer this pledge to continue to tread, together with Gandhi's noble successors, the way of human renewal, toward a brilliant century of humanism. □

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A PROPHET VERSUS A WARRIOR

Shimon Peres

Mahatma Gandhi had no army, no government, no movement and no material means. The lack of government or of material means were what built the immortal figure of Gandhi. He created these by the force of his extraordinary personality and moral authority. Cloaked with his mantle, as a sign of his life of simplicity and purity, divorced from the luxuries of life, uncompromising with truth, negating violence from whatever quarter, Gandhi became the torch-bearer for hundreds of millions of human beings in India and throughout the world. This slight man, thin, wan, was a spiritual giant of this century.

He succeeded in transforming India's national liberation movement from a skeletal party of political activists, enjoying the support of only a thin veneer of intellectuals, into a mass movement with the participation of people from all ethnic and social classes, people who spoke all the various languages and believers of all faiths throughout the sub-continent. The very existence of this popular movement challenged the authorities. Gandhi's political strength was a direct result of his intellectual strength. He elevated the power of morality to unprecedented heights, using two main criteria which he demanded from humanity: devotion and non-violence. For him, these two criteria were absolute values, on which there was no possibility of compromise. He saw truth as a spiritual experience, raising it from a metaphysical state to divine heights. He therefore could wholeheartedly testify about himself

that he never reneged on a promise he had given—neither in his private life nor in the eyes of the public—and he did so without consideration for the high price that was exacted from him, thus forever fulfilling his word. Since he was so strict with himself, he admitted the difficulties involved in practising the principle for non-violence. One of these was the moral dilemma farming posed. He placed great value on agriculture, for without it society could not and would not be able to sustain itself; yet agriculture requires, at times, violent measures to be taken against animals. Regretfully, yet ever unflinchingly faithful to his principles, he admitted this contradiction between the ideal and the reality. He left the perfection of nature until the messianic era. “Snakes and tigers” he said “are God’s answer to the destructive thoughts of humanity” and therefore, when men’s hearts will be filled with love for one another, for nature, for perfection, only then will the golden age be reached in which beasts of prey will learn to live with man.

These words remind us of the messianic vision of the early prophets of Israel. And indeed, in Jewish eyes, Gandhi was as a prophet—a man who preceded his generation, whose strength lay in his beliefs and who knew no fear, not of man nor of politics; nothing, however strong or aggressive, could prevent him from expressing his opinion. In this spirit he endeavoured to frame social life on these two basic ethics side by side with other principles which emanated from them; modesty, managing with few resources, courage and physical work. “If man could manage with only that which is essential to him, there would be no poverty in the world” he said. He who views basic societal norms in such a manner combines the ideals of a sage and the pragmatism of a statesman.

Gandhi did not hide himself in an ivory tower or a Hindu shrine. He began his adult life as a brilliant lawyer, and could of course have continued in this profession and attained high professional achievement and material benefit—but he was wise enough to understand that moral preference was the height of wisdom. This preference found expression not only in the determination of aims but also in establishing the ways and means to attain those aims. All effort was to be subjugated to moral purity, without deviation. Out of a will to work for the good of the people, he insisted on the need to attain economic independence as well as to bring an end to the exploitation of India. In order to serve the best interests of society, he demanded from each individual no small sacrifice—above all, wilful compliance; in other words

to strive for total identification of the individual with the whole, with the goals of society. It was in this manner that he formulated his moral economic policy.

Whilst in Durban, Gandhi began his famous correspondence with the Russian author Leo Tolstoy. These two spiritual giants discussed non-violence and the educational value of modest living. Tolstoy, too, rose above the events and norms of the 19th and 20th centuries, because of the power of his personality. Tolstoy, too, was possessed with a burning soul whose force equalled that of a nuclear chain reaction. He stormed our world with new ideas and new norms. "War and Peace" is not merely a book—it is a message in and of itself. And may be in the depths of his heart, Tolstoy was searching for the heroic response to the idolatry which surrounded Napoleon's personality, of which he said that in his belligerent excursions Napoleon killed and killed and killed until he became famous more and more.

The great author was able to discover the response to this in Gandhi whose heroism lay in his uncompromising battle against violence—and the more he sacrificed of his personal freedom and standard of living in order to bring his ideas to fruition, the greater was his credibility and the larger the halo of glory around him. These two—Napoleon, the genius of war, and Gandhi, the genius of peace, symbolize even at the close of the 20th century, the two paths open to humanity. These are not merely two historical figures, but also two strategic alternatives for building the future: on the one hand, coercion and use of force and on the other, the path of total foregoing of violence.

During his life, Gandhi was unable to carry out his doctrine to the full. Indeed during the struggle of India for independence, there was occasionally outbreak of violence between Indians and British, between Hindus and Moslems—and Gandhi resorted to fasting and special education to bring the people back to sanity. Finally, when India gained its independence, the partition served as a cause for violence. Gandhi did all in his power to overcome this and bring about peace, yet it was he of all people—a prophet of peace—whose life ended as a sacrifice to violence: he was murdered whilst publicly praying for peace.

The international background of the age, too, prevented Gandhi from fulfilling his doctrine. In the face of the unprecedented naked aggression of Hitler, even hardened pacifists were forced to turn to violence. In the face of the tyranny of Stalin, even the greatest believers of non-violence were forced to organize

themselves in ways with which Mahatma's heart could not be at one.

Yet as we approach the 21st century there is a good possibility that mankind, out of the will to live, will adopt the political conclusions of this great man of morality, and dispense with violence. Nuclear weaponry and its inherent risks and the withering away of inter-block confrontation, open the way to hope for a life of peace and the overcoming of violent focal points in many places.

Not everywhere around the globe is there yet understanding that war has no *raison d'être* and violence no reason. There are still focal points of social or national suffering. This suffering emanates from want and leads to jealousy—and jealousy is the harbinger of violence. Overcoming spiritual and material deprivation in order to remove jealousy and eliminate violence is the task facing this generation, thus ensuring for coming generations a life devoid of violence and filled with truth and peace, with love and tranquillity. □

GANDHI AND RELIGION

B. R. Nanda

It is a strange paradox that though Gandhi's attitude to religion holds the key to the understanding of his life and thought, its nuances and significance have been often missed by his admirers as well as his critics. That he should have been misunderstood or deliberately misrepresented by his political opponents was only natural. Few British critics would have gone so far as Archbishop Cosmo Lang, who in a letter to Lord Irwin, described Gandhi as "a mystic, fanatic and anarchist",¹ but most of them would have agreed with Lord Reading, the Viceroy of India, who wrote after his first meeting with the Mahatma: "Mr. Gandhi's religious and moral views are, I believe, admirable, but I confess that I find it difficult to understand the practice of them in politics".² The leaders of the Muslim League, the protagonists of the two-nation theory, could not but malign the man who insisted that the function of religion was to unite rather than divide people, and religion was an unsatisfactory basis for nationality. As for Gandhi's left-wing critics—from M.N. Roy to R.P. Dutt and Namboodiripad—they have accused Gandhi of exploiting religion to rouse the masses, and then deliberately curbing their political consciousness in the interest of the Indian bourgeoisie. Among Gandhi's own adherents there were not a few radicals who chafed under the moral constraints he imposed on the struggle with the British. Then there were the 'modernists' who equated all religion with irrationalism and obscurantism and resented Gandhi's saintly idiom. Finally, some latter-day historians have advanced the thesis

that by using Hindu symbols, Gandhi contributed to the communal polarisation which culminated in the division of India.

This is a formidable indictment, but in my opinion, it rests on a misreading of Gandhi's ideas and actions as well as of the history of the period. I propose, therefore, to examine it by briefly sketching the evolution of Gandhi's religious thought, disentangling its basic strands, evaluating their impact on his personal and public life, and by reassessing their true significance in the historical perspective.

II

Strange as it may seem, even though Gandhi grew up in a devout Hindu household, steeped in Vaishnavism, and was also exposed to strong Jain influences,³ his acquaintance with religion—even with the religion of his birth—was of the meagrest, when in 1888 at the age of nineteen, he arrived in London to study law. A year later when some English Theosophist friends invited him to read Sir Edwin Arnold's *Song Celestial*, it was with some embarrassment that he confessed that he had never read the *Bhagvad Gita* in Sanskrit or even in Gujarati. He also came across another book of Sir Edwin's, *The Light of Asia*, which told the story of Buddha's life, renunciation and teachings. It was in England too that a fellow-vegetarian enthusiast introduced young Gandhi to the Bible. The *New Testament*, particularly, the Sermon on the Mount, went straight to his heart. The verses, "But I say unto you that Ye resist not evil but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also", reminded him of the lines of the Gujarati poet Shamal Bhatt, which he used to hum as a child: "For a bowl of water give a goodly meal". Gandhi tells us in his autobiography that the idea of returning love for hatred and good for evil captivated him; yet he did not comprehend it fully.

The truth is that though Gandhi's interest in religion was awakened, it was not yet deep, and might have faded were it not for the happy accident which took him to South Africa in 1893. In Pretoria he met some ardent Christian missionaries whose main work in life (in Gandhi's words) was "to persuade followers of other faiths to embrace Christianity". The first impact of Quaker proselytizing in a strange country was doubtless strong on Gandhi, but he was in no greater hurry to become a Christian in

Pretoria than he had been to become a Theosophist in London. His knowledge of Hinduism was yet superficial, but he felt with the religion of his birth a vague bond of sentiment. Coates, one of the missionaries, asked Gandhi to cast off his necklace of Vaishnava beads. "This superstition does not become you. Come, let me break the necklace", suggested Coates. "No, you will not", replied Gandhi, "it is a sacred gift from my mother". "But do you believe in it?" asked Coates. "I do not know its mysterious significance", rejoined Gandhi. "I do not think I should come to harm if I did not wear it. But I cannot without sufficient reason give up the necklace that she put round my neck out of love". The necklace was a symbol; Gandhi could no more discard Hinduism than the necklace he was wearing without sufficient reason, both having come down to him from his beloved parents. This sentimental bond with Hinduism was reinforced by correspondence with some of his friends in India to whom he turned when he was under pressure from the Christian missionaries in South Africa. Among these friends was a remarkable man, Rajchandra (or Raychandbhai, as Gandhi called him), a jeweller, a poet and a saint rolled into one, whom Gandhi had known in Bombay. Gandhi has left a pen-picture of the man who came nearest to being his guru:

During the two years I remained in close contact with him I felt in him every moment the spirit of *vairagya* (renunciation)... One rare feature of his writings is that he always set down what he felt in his own experience. There is in them no trace of unreality... I never saw him being tempted by objects of pleasure or luxury in this world. There was a strange power in his eyes; they were extremely bright and free from any sign of impatience or anxiety. They bespoke of single-minded attention.... These qualities can exist only in a man of self-control. He disproved the prevalent idea that a man who is wise in the sphere of *dharma* will not be wise in the affairs of practical life. A student of philosophy of religion, he tried to practise what he believed.⁴

Rajchandra, who was only two years older than Gandhi, died at thirty-three in 1900. The qualities which Gandhi admired in Rajchandra were the qualities he was himself to try to imbibe. Gandhi never forgot his debt to him. He described him as one of the three "moderns", who had influenced him most, the other two being Tolstoy and Ruskin. Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, by exposing the contradictions of organized religion, had helped Gandhi to fend off the proselytizing missionaries in South Africa, and Ruskin's *Unto This Last* had brought home to

him the value of a life of simplicity and the dignity of manual labour. But it was Rajchandra who had given a sense of direction to Gandhi's religious quest. Of particular importance was Rajchandra's insistence on accord between belief and action; it was the way a man lived, not the recital of a verse or the form of a prayer, which made him a good Hindu, a good Muslim or a good Christian. Rajchandra was himself a Jain, but he restored Gandhi's faith in Hinduism. He regarded different faiths "like so many walled enclosures" in which men and women confined themselves. He was always bored by religious controversy and rarely engaged himself in it. He would study and understand the excellence of each faith and explain it to the followers of that faith.⁵

III

The book which became Gandhi's strongest bond with Hinduism as well as the greatest influence on him, and which he called his "spiritual dictionary", was the *Bhagavad Gita*. He had first read it in London in 1890 in Sir Edwin Arnold's verse rendering, the *Song Celestial*. In South Africa, he studied other translations with the original and the book became his daily reading. He memorized one verse every morning while going through his morning toilet, until he had the entire poem by heart.

Two words in the *Gita*, *aparigraha* (non-possession) and *sambhava* (equability) opened to Gandhi limitless vistas. Non-possession implied that he had to jettison the material goods which cramped the spirit, to shake off the bonds of money, property and sex, and to regard himself as the trustee, not the owner, of what he could not shed. Equability required that he must remain unruffled by pain or pleasure, victory or defeat, and work without hope of success or fear of failure, in short, without "hankering after the fruit of action". The *Mahabharata*, the epic of which the *Gita* forms a part, has been a part of Hindu heritage for at least 2,500 years. Gandhi put forward the view that the epic was an allegorical and not a historical work. The real object of the *Gita*, as he understood it, was to point to the goal of self-realization and to show that *nishkam karma* (detached activity) was the way to achieve the goal. He did not accept the traditional interpretation of the *Gita* as the poetic presentation of Lord Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna, the warrior, to go forward and meet his cousins in combat; the battlefield of Kurukshetra was only a symbol of the battle between good and evil which rages in every human heart,

Duryodhan and his party being the baser impulses in man, Arjuna and his party the higher impulses, and Krishna "the dweller within". To those who insisted on taking the story of *Mahabharata* literally, Gandhi pointed out that even if the story was taken at its face-value, the *Mahabharata* had demonstrated the futility of violence: the war had ended in universal devastation in which the victors had been no better off than the vanquished.

Gandhi's critics had a shrewd suspicion that he deliberately underplayed the quietistic and esoteric elements in Hinduism because of the harm which excessive preoccupation with them had done to Hindu society, and that he sought confirmation in the *Gita* for his own framework of values: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *varnashrama* based on division of labour rather than on birth, manual work and *brahmacharya*.⁶

Gandhi did not claim to be a profound scholar, such as B.G. Tilak or Aurobindo Ghose were. He did not, however, regard the *Gita* as a book for the learned; its message was meant to be lived. He had, he said, endeavoured to enforce the teaching of the *Gita* in his own life, and come to the conclusion that perfect renunciation was impossible without perfect observance of *ahimsa* in every shape and form.

Gandhi had a strongly rational and sceptical streak which enabled him to fashion for himself a religious philosophy, which though grounded in Hinduism, acquired a deeply humanist and cosmopolitan complexion. As a student in England, he had been attracted by Theosophy, but had steered clear of its occult aspect. The fervent preaching of Christian missionaries in South Africa not only failed to sweep him off his feet, but set him off on a critical study of other religions. It is not, therefore, surprising that his interpretation of the *Gita* was so novel and unorthodox. No book, however sacred, he said, could be limited to a single interpretation irrespective of time and place; the meanings of great writings were subject to a process of evolution. "Every living faith", he averred, "must have within itself the power of rejuvenation".⁷ Every formula of every religion had to be subjected to the acid test of reason; no scriptural sanction was valid if it resulted in unjust or inhuman practices.

Gandhi did not hesitate to apply the acid test to the Hinduism of his own day. He was ruthless in his criticism of evils that had crept into Hindu society. In his autobiography he tells us how he was scandalized by animal sacrifices and "rivers of blood" he saw in the Kali temple at Calcutta, and the avarice of the priests at

Varanasi. He denounced purdah, the dowry system, child marriage and its concomitant, enforced widowhood. On the position of women, his views were far ahead of his time and in some ways remarkably similar to those of present-day women reformers. "Woman is the companion", he affirmed as early as 1918, "with equal mental capacities... and she has the same right of freedom and liberty". He advocated equal legal status and the right of vote for women. The oft-quoted text, "for women there can be no freedom", ascribed to Manu, he dismissed as an interpolation, and if it was not an interpolation, he could only say that, in Manu's day, women did not have the status they deserved. Against the abuses of caste and untouchability he waged an unrelenting war. When B.S. Moonje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, tried to prove that untouchability was an integral part of Hinduism, Gandhi retorted: "Happily for me, my Hinduism does not bind me to every verse because it is written in Sanskrit...in spite of your literal knowledge of the *shastras*, yours is a distorted kind of Hinduism. I claim in all humility to have lived Hinduism all my life".⁸

IV

To understand Gandhi's impact on Hinduism, it would be useful at this stage to say something about the predicament of Hindu society during Gandhi's formative years. Throughout the nineteenth century Hinduism believed itself to be beleaguered. The problem, as the founders of a new religious society, Tattvabodhini Sabha, put it in 1839 was, how "to propagate an ancient, dignified and intellectual form of Hinduism...to put a bar to the spread of atheism and Christianity."⁹ Four years before Gandhi was born, an Anglo-Indian writer predicted in the *Calcutta Review*¹⁰ the doom of Hinduism: "We believe the combined influence of Railways and Education will prove to have brought out the long-wished-for result." In 1872 a high British administrator and scholar, Sir Alfred Lyall, stated in the *Fortnightly Review* that "the old gods of Hinduism will die in these elements of intellectual light and air as a net full of fish, lifted up out of water". In the same year, Robert Knight, one of the most eminent and liberal-minded British journalists in India, said:¹¹ "Our own conviction is profound that India will never possess Home Rule until she has cast away the false systems of religion... that have been the cause of her degradation and become Christian." Two years before the First World War, Sir Andrew Fraser, a former Governor of Bengal,

commenting on the work of Christian missionaries stated in his book *Among Indian Rajahs and Ryots*,¹² that the "influence of Christianity was growing in a most remarkable manner and there is an opportunity now such as never existed before."

The Hindu response to this challenge in the last quarter of the nineteenth century took several forms. The Arya Samaj, founded in 1875 by Swami Dayanand, harked back to the pristine purity of the Vedic times, and was assertive, almost belligerent, in its attitude towards Christianity and Islam. Ranade, the great judge and social reformer of Maharashtra, believed that the genius of Hindu culture lay in its continuity, tolerance and capacity for assimilation, and called upon Hinduism not only to purify itself, but to emulate the Christians' power of organisation, indignation against wrong-doing, and active philanthropy. Swami Vivekananda warned the Hindu intelligentsia that all talk of social reform had little meaning if it was confined to a small social circle of the urban middle class. "Go down to the basis of the thing, to the very root", he said, "put the fire there, and let it burn upwards and make an Indian nation...So long as millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor, who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them."

Gandhi was destined to give the broad base and the urgency to the purification and revitalization of Hinduism for which Vivekananda had so passionately pleaded. Vivekananda himself died young in 1900. Ranade's Social Reform Conference remained a one-man band, and hardly penetrated beyond the tiny English-educated urban class; Swami Dayananda's success was greater, but the appeal of the Arya Samaj was limited by its very belligerence and sectarianism. There were other exponents of enlightened Hinduism, Lajpat Rai, B.C. Pal, Chandavarkar and Annie Besant, but none of them possessed the mass appeal and the tenacity which was to enable Gandhi to pit himself against Hindu orthodoxy. G. Subramania Iyer, an eminent Congress leader of Madras, had asked in 1897: "Cannot reformers instal Swami Vivekananda or some spiritual hero like him as a reformer Shankaracharya as there was a second Pope for some time in Europe?" Iyer's hope was to be realized twenty years later after Gandhi's return from South Africa. Gandhi's charisma dispensed with the need for any formal authority as a religious leader. He knew that elitist Hinduism tended to be abstract and mystical, while popular Hinduism tended to be ritualistic and obscurantist. He was tempted neither by the intellectual pleasures of theology nor by the blissful joys

of mysticism. He challenged age-old notions and prejudices with impunity. He had a healthy aversion to occult phenomena and never encouraged superstition in any form. When asked about miracles he said, "What is the good of overturning nature?" He did not think of God in anthropomorphic terms. "Truth for me is God", he said, "and God's Law and God are not different things or facts in the sense that an earthly king and his law are different... When we say He rules our actions, we are simply using human language and we try to limit Him." Gandhi's Hinduism was thus reduced to a few fundamental beliefs: in the supreme reality of God, the unity of all life and the value of *ahimsa* (love) as a means of realizing God.

He did not hesitate to reinterpret traditional beliefs and reject practices which were repugnant to his reason or conscience. He believed that Hinduism possessed the power to rejuvenate itself. He gave the example of the concept of sacrifice (*yajna*):

At one time they sacrificed animals to propitiate angry Gods. Their descendants, but our less remote ancestors, read a different meaning with the word "sacrifice" and they taught that sacrifice was meant to be of our baser self, to please not angry Gods, but the one living God within.¹³

It will be safe to say that Gandhi was one of the greatest innovators in the history of Hinduism. He reshaped and redefined time-honoured concepts. I have already mentioned his treatment of the story of *Mahabharata* as an allegory. He did the same thing with the *Bhagavat*, in which Krishna became "the *atman* (soul) and the Gopis the many senses of man. They are obedient servants of the self-controlled *atman* and dance before it as it wills".¹⁴ *Sadhana*—the pursuit of spirituality, which is commonly supposed to draw one away from mundane affairs, came to mean that the aspirant had to make himself an instrument of service to his fellowmen. An ashram was to be not merely a haven from the cares of worldly life, but a training ground for social and political workers. *Moksha* was liberation from impure thoughts. *Ahimsa* was not merely a question of what to eat or not to eat, but the motive force for *satyagraha*—Gandhi's non-violent technique of effecting social changes. Fasting was not merely a recipe for nature-cure or mortification of the flesh, but an ultimate weapon in the armoury of *satyagraha*. *Brahmacharya* was not merely sexual restraint, but a way of life, demanding self-control in thought, words and deeds. *Go-seva* (cow-protection) did not

consist in building *pinjrapoles* for old or infirm cows, but called for scientific breeding of cows and well-equipped dairies for supply of milk to towns and villages.

Gandhi added a new dimension even to the meaning of prayer. "The relation between God and myself", he wrote, "is not only at prayer but at all times that of master and slave."¹⁵ Prayer was simply a means of self-purification; it was to the heart and mind what a daily bath was to the body.¹⁶ Since divinity pervaded everyone and everything, when he prayed, he was not begging or demanding something from God, but from himself, "my Higher Self, real self with which I have not yet achieved complete identification".¹⁷

One cannot but admire Gandhi's revisionist strategy in his encounter with Hindu orthodoxy. He declined to fight it on its own ground, by denying unqualified allegiance to scriptural authority, and claiming the right to interpret religious texts in the light of reason, morality and common sense. His task was made easier by the fact that he selected one Hindu scripture, the *Gita*, and made it a common symbol between himself and the Hindus of his generation. When his interpretations were called in question, he disarmed his critics by suggesting that the text on which they relied could be an interpolation, or simply by asserting that he had all his life "lived Hinduism", and knew what he was talking about. He did not, however, make any claim to infallibility. "The opinions I have formed", he wrote, "and the conclusions I have arrived at are not final. I may change them tomorrow."

Gandhi could take all these liberties with Hinduism, because he was an "Insider", and was seen by the people as a devout Hindu, a great Hindu, a *Mahatma*. His unique position as a political leader stood him in good stead as a social reformer. His insistence on the autonomy of human reason and conscience in the interpretation of religious ideas and practices not only for himself, but for everyone else, makes him one of the most daring religious reformers in history.

Ramana Maharishi, one of the most venerated Indian saints of the twentieth century, is stated to have remarked that Gandhi "was a good man who had sacrificed his spiritual development by taking too great burdens upon himself."¹⁸ Gandhi's signal service to Hinduism lay in his attempt to shift it from its individualistic moorings. He went so far as to say that the only way to find God was to "see Him in His Creation and be one with it." He did not know, he said, any religion apart from human

activity; the spiritual law did not work in a vacuum but in the ordinary activities of life; religion which took no account of practical affairs and did not help to solve them was no religion.¹⁹ God, he once said, "can only appear to the poorest of the poor in the form of work." He told N.K. Bose, the anthropologist (who worked as his secretary for a few months in 1946–47), that a man was best represented not by the highest flights of thought which he reached at rare moments, but by the actual measure of the ideals of his daily life.²⁰ C.F. Andrews, who studied Gandhi's life and thought closely, wrote to Romain Rolland that in Gandhi's inner life "it was the passion for others which is supreme."²¹ In another memorable phrase, Andrews called Gandhi "a saint of action, rather than of contemplation". Another British friend of Gandhi, Horace Alexander, also observed how the Mahatma had deviated from the beaten path of Indian saints. "Gandhi was a mystic," Alexander wrote, "but he was a very matter-of-fact mystic: no dreamer of heavenly dreams, no visionary, who saw things unutterable when in a state of trance. When the inner voice spoke to Gandhi, it was only to tell him, what to do tomorrow—how to act more effectively to bring union of hearts between Hindus and Muslims or how to hasten the downfall of untouchability."²²

V

Rajchandra, Gandhi's religious mentor, used to say that the real test of spiritual progress was the extent to which one could translate one's beliefs in work-a-day life. After pondering day after day on the *Gita*, Gandhi himself came to the conclusion that "what cannot be followed in day-to-day practice cannot be called religion". Meditation and worship were "not exclusive things to be kept like jewels locked up in a strong-box. They must be seen in every act of ours."²³

As a lawyer in Durban, and later in Johannesburg, where he came to command a peak practice of £5000 a year, Gandhi did not consider it his professional obligation to defend a client if he was in the wrong. If he was convinced during the progress of a case that his client had withheld material facts from him, he did not hesitate to repudiate him openly in the court. When a client failed to pay his dues, he did not have recourse to law; it was, he said, his own error of judgement which was responsible for the loss.

As he meditated on the *Gita*, and the ideal of non-possession

(*aparigraha*) grew upon him, Gandhi began to reduce his needs, and pay less and less attention to what passed for prestige in the middle class. This trend towards simplicity received a great boost in 1904. One evening that year, as Gandhi was taking a train from Johannesburg to Durban, a friend gave him a book to read. It was Ruskin's *Unto This Last*. Gandhi sat through the night and read it from cover to cover. Before the train reached Durban next morning, he had already resolved to adopt the design of the simple and austere life which Ruskin had outlined. Within a few months the Phoenix Ashram had come up; here, away from the heat and dust of towns, and working on a farm among people who shared his ideals, Gandhi could retire from time to time to pose questions about his inner growth.

Over the next decade in South Africa the transformation in Gandhi's life, the snapping of the bonds of money, property and sex, and his conversion into, what Churchill was later to describe, a 'naked faquir', enhanced Gandhi's capacity for single-minded application to public causes. It sustained him in conducting his unequal and long drawn-out battle with General Smuts, and it certainly contributed to his unique mass appeal as well as stamina when he became the dominant figure in Indian politics. In a remarkably perceptive article "The Soul As It Is and How To Deal With It", in *Hibbert Journal* (January 1918), Professor Gilbert Murray, after sketching Gandhi's career in South Africa, warned: "Persons in power should be very careful how they deal with a man who cares nothing for sensual pleasure, nothing for riches, nothing for comfort or praise or promotion, but is simply determined to do what he believes to be right. He is a dangerous and uncomfortable enemy—because his body, which you can always conquer, gives you so little purchase upon his soul."

Gandhi's religious quest helped to mould not only his personality, but the political technique with which he confronted racialism in South Africa and colonialism in India. In the evolution of satyagraha as a mode of non-violent struggle, he acknowledged his debt not only to Tolstoy and Thoreau, but to the *Gita* and the Sermon on the Mount. One can be an atheist or agnostic and still practise satyagraha. But it is easier for men of religion to accept the basic assumptions of satyagraha: that it is worthwhile fighting, and even dying, for causes which transcend one's personal interests, that the body perishes, but the soul lives, that no oppressor can crush the imperishable spirit of man, that every human being, however wicked he may appear to be, has a hidden nobility, a divine spark which can be ignited.

VI

"Why I am a Hindu", was the title of an article Gandhi wrote in 1927. Gandhi gave two main reasons for his attachment to the religion of his birth:

It was the "most tolerant of all religions". Its freedom from dogma gave the votary "the largest scope for self-expression. Not being an exclusive religion it enabled the followers not merely to respect all the other religions, but...to admire and assimilate whatever may be good in the other faiths. Non-violence is common to all religions, but it has found the highest expression and application in Hinduism... Hinduism believes in the oneness not only of merely all human life but in the oneness of all other lives.²⁴

It is significant that he should have highlighted those elements in Hinduism which gave primacy to individual judgement and conscience on the one hand, and to co-existence and toleration in relations with followers of other religions, on the other.

Ever since he had made a comparative study of religions in his South African days, Gandhi had been impressed by the underlying unity of all religions. In an article in his weekly paper, *Indian Opinion* in August 1905, Gandhi declared that the time had passed when the followers of one religion could "stand and say, ours is the only true religion and all others are false." For the next four decades Gandhi continued to emphasize the need for co-existence and tolerance between adherents of different faiths. The various religions were "as so many leaves of a tree"; they might seem different but "at the trunk they were one." God, Allah, Rama, Narayan, Ishwar, Khuda were descriptions of the same Being. Gandhi quoted the saint Narasimha: "The different shapes into which gold was beaten gave rise to different names and forms; but ultimately it was all gold."²⁵ God's grace and revelation were not the monopoly of any race or nation; they descended equally upon all who waited upon God. No religion was "absolutely perfect. All are equally imperfect or more or less perfect". Gandhi told an American missionary in 1937:²⁶

I...do not take as literally true the text that Jesus is the only begotten son of God. God cannot be the exclusive father and I cannot ascribe exclusive divinity to Jesus. He is as divine as Krishna or Rama, Mohamed or Zoroaster. Similarly I do not regard every word of the Vedas or the Koran as inspired. The sum total of each of these books is certainly inspired, but I miss that inspiration in many of the things taken individually. The Bible is as much a book of religion with me as the *Gita* and the Koran.

Asked as to what he would do when there were conflicting counsels from different religions, Gandhi replied: "Truth is superior to everything; and I reject what conflicts with it. Similarly that which is in conflict with non-violence should be rejected. And on matters which can be reasoned out, that which conflicted with Reason must also be rejected".²⁷

The extraordinary catholicity of Gandhi's religious outlook intrigued and sometimes infuriated his contemporaries. His first biographer in South Africa considered his views "too closely allied to Christianity to be entirely Hindu and too deeply saturated with Hinduism to be called Christian; while his sympathies are so wide and catholic that one would imagine he has reached a point where the formulae of sects are meaningless". In his lifetime he was variously labelled, a Sanatanist (orthodox) Hindu, a renegade Hindu, a Buddhist, a Theosophist, a Christian and a "Christian-Muhammadan". He was all these and more. He chided Christian missionaries for their "irreligious gamble" for converts. His opposition to conversion from one religion to another was based on principle. While he was in South Africa, he exhorted the Arya Samaj against undertaking any missionary activity in that country. He did not permit proselytising in his ashrams. Contrary to the impression at the time, his English disciple, Miss Slade (Mirabehn), was never converted to Hinduism. As Gandhi was at pains to explain, she was given not a Hindu but an Indian name, and this "had been done at her instance and for her convenience." Similarly Richard Gregg, who wrote extensively on non-violence and stayed in Gandhi's ashram, was called Govind, but never became a Hindu.

We have in the Ashram today several faiths represented. No proselytizing is practised or permitted. We recognise that all these faiths are true and divinely inspired, and all have suffered through the necessarily imperfect handling of imperfect men.²⁸

When some Hindus protested that he was relatively "tender" when speaking to Christian and Muslim audiences, but unsparing in his criticism of the Hindus, Gandhi pleaded guilty to the charge. For one thing, he said he did not claim to know as much about Christianity and Islam as he knew about Hinduism. For another, he felt that Christians and Muslims were more likely to misunderstand him than Hindus.²⁹

Gandhi had studied both Christianity and Islam and had many Christian and Muslim friends. He tells us in his autobiography

how certain aspects of Christianity—the life and death of Jesus, the Sermon On The Mount and the crystalline purity of some Christians appealed to him. He called Christ the “Prince of Satyagrahis”. He read a translation of the Koran and the life of the Prophet, and was struck by the courage with which he and his first followers had faced the humiliations and hardships heaped upon them. Many years later when he was in Yervada jail, Gandhi advised his English disciple, Mirabehn (Miss Slade), who had been reading the Upanishads, to read the Koran, and assured her that she would find many “gems” in it.³⁰

Gandhi’s reverence for the Bible and the Koran did not, however, prevent him from exercising the critical faculty which he applied to the study of Hindu scriptures. We learn from Mahadev Desai’s diary (4 March 1925) that Gandhi was deeply shocked when told that Maulana Shaukat Ali subscribed to “the law of an eye for an eye and a head for a head”, and had argued that “if there is a mention of stoning to death in the Quran, the act must be accepted as right and proper.”³¹ The place of violence in Islam had been a vexed issue during the Khilafat movement; most Muslim leaders had insisted that they had agreed to adhere to non-violence as a matter of expediency and not as a principle. Gandhi’s own view was that in the Quran, “non-violence is enjoined as duty, violence is permitted as a necessity”.³² On another occasion when told that Prophet Mohammed had prescribed the use of sword in certain circumstances, Gandhi replied:

I suppose most Muslims will agree. But I read religion in a different way. Khan Saheb Abdul Ghaffar Khan derives his belief in non-violence from the Koran, and the Bishop of London derives his belief in violence from the Bible. I derive my belief in non-violence from the *Gita*, whereas there are others who read violence in it. But if the worst came to the worst and if I came to the conclusion that the Koran teaches violence, I would still reject violence, but I would not therefore say that the Bible is superior to the Koran or that Mohamed is inferior to Jesus. It is not my function to judge Mohamed and Jesus. It is enough that my non-violence is independent of the sanction of scriptures.³³

Gandhi’s advocacy of mutual toleration and respect between different religions originally arose from his study of comparative religion, but it had a practical aspect too. All his adult life he was leading struggles against racial, social and political injustice and his adherents in these struggles belonged to all the major religions. Muslim merchants had been the backbone of his movement in

Natal and Transvaal. Gandhi was aware of the gulf between the two major communities of India and wanted to bridge it. In 1905 in an article in his weekly journal, he had asked: "Is it not also a fact that between Muhammadan and Hindu there is a great need for...toleration? Sometimes one is inclined to think it is even greater than between East and West."³⁴ A few months earlier, in a lecture on Hinduism at Johannesburg, he argued that when there were no political influences at work, there was no difficulty about Hindus and Muslims living side by side in perfect peace and amity, each respecting the prejudices of the other, and each following his own faith without let or hindrance."³⁵ This was a remarkably perceptive comment on the shape of things to come, when he returned to the homeland ten years later.

VII

Those who blame Gandhi for mixing religion with politics evidently do not know what he meant by religion. There is no excuse for this ignorance, for Gandhi repeatedly made his meaning clear. For example, in reply to criticism in a British journal that he was introducing religion in politics, he wrote in 1920:

Let me explain what I mean by religion. It is not the Hindu religion, which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion, which transcends Hinduism which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and whichever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which... leaves the soul restless until it has found itself.³⁶

Four years later, while affirming that for him there was no politics without religion, he explained that this was "not the religion that hates and fights, but the universal Religion of Toleration."³⁷ In 1940 he reiterated that "religion should pervade every one of our actions," but added, "here religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the universe. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc."³⁸ Gandhi's concept of religion had little in common with what generally passes for organized religion: dogmas, rituals, superstition and bigotry. Indeed, shorn of these accretions, Gandhian religion was simply an ethical framework for the conduct of daily life. Unfortunately, most intelligent people who concede the value of an ethical framework in domestic and social spheres, are sceptical about its feasibility in politics. Politics is considered a game in which expediency must take precedence

over morality. Tilak, Gandhi's great contemporary, told him in 1918, "politics is not for *sadhus*".

Gandhi did not and could not accept the commonly accepted view of politics, because satyagraha, the mode of struggle he had evolved for fighting against social and political oppression, was rooted in morality. It excluded untruth, secrecy and hatred; it eschewed violence; it invited suffering at the hands of the oppressor instead of inflicting it on him, and it presumed that it was possible to convert the enemy of today into a friend of tomorrow.

Satyagraha could be moral or nothing; it was a form of struggle in which Gandhi could lose all the battles but still win the war. His self-imposed constraints irked some of his followers, but he had good reasons for enforcing them. The non-violent struggles which Gandhi waged in South Africa, involved a few thousand Indians in a limited area whom he could personally guide. But in India the scale was continental and the numbers involved directly and indirectly were in millions. Gandhi's constant concern was how to arouse these millions, and yet to prevent his movement from dissolving into disorder and anarchy. He never forgot the terrible sequel in the Punjab in April 1919 soon after he had launched satyagraha against the Rowlatt Bills. All his energies were, therefore, directed to keeping a firm rein on the movement. He did not induct the industrial workers into his campaign; he did not permit peasants to withhold rent from the landlords. He deliberately excluded the despotic princely states from his civil disobedience campaigns. All these self-denying ordinances baffled his radical critics, who accused him of curbing the "revolutionary stirrings" of the masses. What they could not see was that the basic strategy of a non-violent struggle must necessarily be different from that of a violent one. For Gandhi it was not a question of capturing a particular outpost by superior force, or of overwhelming the enemy by sheer numbers. The purpose of satyagraha was to generate those processes of introspection and rethinking which would make it possible to arrive at a readjustment of relationships between the contending parties and all this had to be done without generating hatred and violence. Non-violence was the central issue; on this the Mahatma would accept no compromise. "I would welcome," he said, "even utter failure with non-violence unimpaired, rather than depart from it by a hair's breadth to achieve a doubtful success." It was because of his supreme anxiety to keep the movement firmly under control that he invariably began his campaigns cautiously, and only gradually extended

them in range and intensity. And he called off his campaigns—as he did after Chauri Chaura in 1922—when he sensed indiscipline and violence were creeping into the movement. It is the absence of this scruple and caution which has made most mass struggles in the post-independence period a travesty of the Gandhian satyagraha.

Ten years before Gandhi's return to India from South Africa, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, whom Gandhi hailed as his political guru, had talked of "spiritualising politics". Gokhale, whose secular credentials were beyond question, was convinced that India needed men who could give all their talents and all their time to her service. For centuries India had her bands of sanyasins, who had turned their backs upon worldly ambitions; why could this reserve of self-sacrifice not be tapped for the social and political regeneration of India? This idea of evoking abnegation and self-denial for secular causes which inspired Gokhale to establish the Servants of India Society, found a wider application not only in Gandhi's ashrams, but in the social and political campaigns he conducted in India. Inevitably these movements had moral and religious overtones, which jarred on the westernized Indian intellectuals, who in Gandhi's time (as in our own), tended to postulate a sharp antithesis between science and religion and treated all religions as irrational and obscurantist. They did not fully grasp the deep humanism and universality of Gandhi's religious outlook. They failed to see the philosophical implications of the advance of science from the mechanistic and materialistic moorings of the nineteenth century. Albert Einstein, a great scientist, contemporary and admirer of Gandhi, wrote in 1934 that "the more profound scientists were not without a religious feeling though it was different from the religiosity of the common man:

But the scientist is possessed by the sense of universal causation. His religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of the natural law which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection.

Einstein added that this feeling of the scientist was the guiding principle of his life, and "in so far as he succeeds in keeping himself from the shackles of selfish desire, it is...akin to that which possessed the religious geniuses of all ages."³⁹ Among these geniuses, Einstein included Gandhi. Einstein considered that the moral qualities of its leading personalities "are perhaps

of even greater significance for a generation and for the course of history than purely intellectual accomplishments." His tribute to Gandhi paid fifty years ago in 1939 can hardly be improved upon:

A leader of his people unsupported by any outward authority; a politician whose success rests not upon craft nor the mastery of technical devices, but simply on the convincing power of his personality; a victorious fighter who has always scorned the use of force and inflexible consistency, who has devoted all his strength to the uplifting of his people and the betterment of their lot; a man who had confronted the brutality of Europe with the dignity of the simple human being and thus at all times risen superior.

Generations to come, it may be, will scarce believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.

VIII

The mental barrier between the westernized Indian intelligentsia and Gandhi which existed in his lifetime survives today in a different way: a peculiar lack of will even to study and understand him. This barrier has even contributed to the denigration and distortion of his pivotal role in the struggle for freedom. It has been a fashion in certain circles, to foist the responsibility for the partition of India on him, and to arraign him for the communalization of politics which culminated in the division of India.

Gandhi's support to the Khilafat movement has especially come in for much uninformed criticism. This support in 1919-22 stemmed neither from a momentary impulse nor from tactical calculation. Gandhi had his reasons, which have often been missed by his admirers as well as his critics, for intervening in a crisis which was not of his making, but which had brought millions of Indian Muslims on the verge of desperation. The resultant Khilafat-Non-cooperation alliance turned out to be an unprecedented demonstration of Hindu-Muslim unity, the like of which had never been seen before, nor was to be seen again in this sub-continent. The alliance gladdened the hearts of Indian nationalists as much as it bewildered the ruling power. It brought Indian Muslims for the first time in a big way into the mainstream of Indian nationalism, but the experience was much too short, and, thanks to Kemal Ataturk, had an unhappy ending. To the historian, seeking to unravel the history of this period, the important question is not only why Gandhi agreed to support the pleas of Indian

Muslims on behalf of the Ottoman Khilafat, but how the fate of Turkey and its Sultan Caliph came so completely to obsess the minds and sway the hearts of a whole generation of Indian Muslims. It was not only the semi-literate village maulvis, school teachers, artisans and small shopkeepers, who were swept off their feet, but graduates of British universities, such as Dr. Ansari, Maulana Mohamed Ali, Dr. Syed Mahmud; seasoned barristers such as Jinnah and Mazharul Haq; and confirmed loyalists of the British Raj such as Ameer Ali and the Aga Khan, who were deeply agitated over the misfortunes of Turkey. I shall not, however, enlarge here upon this subject, as I have dealt with it in my book, *Gandhi, Pan-Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism in India*.

Gandhi's use of such words as *swaraj*, *sarvodaya*, *ahimsa* and *satyagraha* was exploited by the Muslim League during its campaign for Pakistan to estrange Muslims from the nationalist struggle. The fact is that these expressions, when used by Gandhi, had little religious significance. They were derived from Sanskrit, but since most of the Indian languages are derived from Sanskrit, this made them easily intelligible to the masses. The English translation of these words or a purely legal or constitutional terminology, may have sounded more modern and secular, but it would have passed over the heads of all but a tiny urbanized English-educated minority. The protagonists of Pakistan made much play with the phrase "Ram Rajya", which Gandhi occasionally employed to describe the goal of the Indian freedom struggle. "Ram Rajya" was simply Gandhi's equivalent for the English term "utopia". The common people, to whom his writings and speeches were usually addressed, instinctively knew that he was not referring to the monarchical form of government in ancient India, but to an ideal polity free from inequality, injustice and exploitation.

Gandhi's prayer meetings were held not in temples, but under the open sky, and became a symbol of religious harmony by including recitations from Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Parsi and Buddhist texts. When the prayers and hymns had been recited, he spoke on the problems which faced the country. In the last months of his life at a time of bitter religious tension, his prayer meetings became a defiant symbol of tolerance and his post-prayer talk served the purpose of a daily press conference.

Thus the symbols used by Gandhi had ceased to be exclusively Hindu symbols. The saintly idiom remained, but its content changed; this is something which often escaped the attention of Gandhi's critics. One of them, M.N. Roy, who, in his

Communist as well as Radical Humanist phases, had ridiculed Gandhi's religious approach to politics, confessed later, that he had failed to detect the secular approach of the Mahatma beneath the religious terminology, and that essentially Gandhi's message had been "moral, humanist, cosmopolitan".⁴⁰

As regards Gandhi's responsibility for the partition of India, all I would say is that no one did more to avert it, or to mitigate its consequences when it came. In 1946, at a critical moment, when communal bitterness and violence were escalating, Gandhi confided his strategy to Professor N.K. Bose, who was acting as his secretary. "The first thing is that politics has divided us into Hindus and Muslims. I want to rescue people from this quagmire and make them work on solid ground, where people are people. Therefore, my appeal here is not to the Muslims as Muslims, nor to the Hindus as Hindus, but to ordinary human beings who have to keep their villages clean, build schools for their children, and take many other steps so that it can make life better."

Gandhi took little part in the final negotiations for "the transfer of power", but his opposition to partition was an open secret. "We are unable to think coherently," he declared, "whilst the British power is still functioning in India. Its function is not to change the map of India. All it has to do is to withdraw and leave India, carrying out the withdrawal, if possible, in an orderly manner, may be even in chaos, on or before the promised date." The very violence, which in the opinion of Nehru, Patel and other Congress leaders and that of the British Government provided a compelling motive for partition, was for him a strong argument against it. To accept partition because of the fear of civil war was to acknowledge that everything was to be got "if mad violence was perpetrated in sufficient measure." Gandhi believed that communal tension, however serious it seemed in 1947, was a temporary phase, and the British had no right to impose partition "on an India temporarily gone mad". His plea that there should be "peace before Pakistan" was not acceptable to Jinnah and the Muslim League. In fact their case was that there could be no peace until Pakistan was established.

Few people are aware of Gandhi's great contribution to the concept of secularism in India. Deeply religious as he was, he said that he would have opposed any proposal for a State religion even if the whole population of India had professed the same religion. He looked upon religion as a personal matter. He told a missionary: "The State would look after your secular welfare,

health, communications, currency and so on, but not your or my religion. That is everybody's personal concern."⁴¹

The resolution on fundamental rights passed by the Karachi Congress in 1931 with Gandhi's cordial approval, affirmed the principle of religious freedom and declared that "the State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions". This doctrine was embodied in the constitution of independent India even after the Muslim League waged and won the campaign for the partition of the country on the basis of religion. Louis Fischer, Gandhi's American biographer, noted the strange paradox that Jinnah, who had grown up as a secular nationalist in his younger days and who apparently had little interest in religion, founded a State based on religion, while Gandhi, wholly religious, worked to establish a secular State.⁴² □

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GANDHI'S PHILOSOPHY OF NON-VIOLENCE

Marietta Stepaniants

'Mahatma' (a great soul) is not the only name given to Gandhi by his compatriots. He was also called *bapu*—father, *karmayogi*—man of action. Some described him as a half-naked fakir, an agent of British imperialism and a servant of the Indian bourgeoisie. He was called an unarmed prophet, an Indian Saint Paul or Francis of Assisi, and judged as an applied philosopher, a practical idealist and a mystical ascetic.

Who was he after all?

There is always controversy over outstanding personalities, who always have ardent followers and supporters as well as fanatical enemies and critics. Warning against distortions and simplifications of Gandhi's teaching and activities, Romain Rolland said: "God save the great man from those who will never be able to understand his teaching and who, dividing it into paragraphs, will destroy harmony and the higher gift of the living soul!"

So let us not pass any judgements but just try to analyze some aspects of Gandhi's teaching instead; particularly on aspects which have to do with the current changes we are experiencing: changes often accompanied by violence and a resurgence of those misconceptions that compel people to look to violence as a way out of their difficulties.

Gandhism is often identified with a philosophy of non-violence. Is this judgement correct? Was non-violence for Gandhi

a political tactic or a credo achieved through suffering and a life philosophy?

The philosophic views of Gandhi, a professional lawyer, were greatly influenced by *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita* and *Mahabharata* as well as the *Bible* and the *Koran*. Gandhi was also inspired by the ideas of Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin, Ralph Emerson and Henry Thoreau. His interest in philosophy was largely due to political pragmatism, for he devoted his life to the struggle for independence. The great service of Gandhi was that he managed to find the lofty ethical motivation to the national liberation movement by arming his compatriots opposed to the colonial authorities with the only weapon accessible to them—strength of the spirit. Love for Wisdom, typical of all philosophers, has acquired a specific form with Gandhi: it was an experiment with Truth rather than an abstract pursuit of Truth as an answer to eternal questions facing humanity. No wonder he called his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

To understand the essence of his experiments, we have to find out what he meant by Truth. "Truth is God" is his basic formula, to which researchers have failed to find a clue so far. Perhaps it is in one of Gandhi's letters written on 9 July, 1932 which explains the formula "God is Truth", which was later replaced by "Truth is God". The formula 'God is Truth' does not mean the identity of the two or determination of the former as true. Truth is not an attribute of God, but He is it. He is nothing without it. "Sat", or truth in Sanskrit means "is". The God is, anything else isn't. (Letter to P.G. Mathew dated 9 July 1932).

Gandhi's Truth cannot be described in a metaphysical way or understood by reason; it is existential. Truth is God and God is the essence of life, pure and innocent consciousness, ethics and morality, fearlessness and the source of light and life, Gandhi said. The above statements reveal the mystically coloured pantheistic vision. Perception of God is understood as realization of Truth. Therefore the former formula was revised. Gandhi himself attaching great importance to this revision, considering it to be the most significant of his theoretical discoveries. Truth being primarily an ethical category.

Absolute truth—God is inconceivable, but at the same time, the essence of human life is in the efforts to realize it. Until I realize absolute truth, Gandhi claimed, I must adhere to relative truth in my understanding. This relative truth must be my (temporary) guiding star and shield. (Gandhi, *My Life*, 1969,

p. 37). It is prompted by the voice of awareness or by conscience, to put it differently. One has to be guided by conscience in one's life, seeking perfection and realization of Truth in oneself and in society. This was exactly the aim pursued by Gandhi in his experiments.

Gandhian experiments were essentially different from experiments known to the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain traditions, as they are not focused on the individual's inner world but are carried out in a wide public context and require joint, collective efforts, not only individual ones. Take one example. Suffering being one of the main themes of Indian religious-philosophic thought, nearly all Indian systems tried to develop ways and means of delivering the individual of suffering, seeing the reason for the latter in the individual's sins in his "former life". The way out was either in accepting the suffering with humility and behaving perfectly in the hope of deserving a happier life next time, or in stopping the *samsara* (wandering of the soul) chain by achieving *nirvana*. The individual is to decide which way to take.

Gandhi also considered suffering to be a law of human existence, but he believed that society as a whole not the individual alone, is to blame for it and hence saw the way out in efforts to perfect the individual and society.

Since Gandhi saw violence or various manifestations of it as the main source of suffering, he proclaimed non-violence as the panacea and tried to demonstrate this by his own example.

For him, violence, or *himsa*, was the animal element in the individual, and non-violence, or *ahimsa*, was evidence of his divine nature and a synonym of Truth-God, its "soul" being a means of realization. Gandhi admitted that the ideal of non-violence itself was not original, as it was proclaimed in the scriptures and was taken for a universal truth. Seeing his service in his attempt to apply universal truths in everyday life, he experimented with various forms of non-violence on individual and social levels.

Gandhi strictly adhered to the principle of *ahimsa* in his personal life. In 1906 at the age of 37 he took the vow of *brahmacharya*, which includes renunciation of all property, and vow of celibacy and vegetarianism. Individual abstention from any manifestations of violence was not unusual for India Jains, for instance, are known to strictly observe *ahimsa*. The new thing about Gandhi's experiment was the involvement of the whole society.

It was he who proposed and staged, first in South Africa

and then in India, an unprecedented experiment of struggle against the exploiters' and colonial authorities' violence through the use of civil disobedience—satyagraha. He made the first attempt to use a non-violent method in settling class and particularly religious conflicts.

Unlike some other leaders of the national liberation movement; he did not demand secularization of politics. Moreover, he declared that "those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means." To understand the essence of his position, at least three basic points have to be taken into account. First, true faith in God was seen by Gandhi as serving the nation. "I do not recognize any other God than the one living in the hearts of millions of people," he said. "They are unaware of his presence, but I am aware of that. And I worship God who is Truth, or Truth which is God by serving these millions."

Second, religion was viewed by Gandhi as the cementing foundation of the human community, for he believed that various religions were beautiful flowers from one garden or branches of the gigantic tree and that all of them were equally true. "The Allah of Islam" Gandhi wrote in his weekly paper *Harijan* in 1938 "is the same as the God of the Christians and the Isvara of the Hindus. Living faith in this God means equal respect for all religions. It would be the height of intolerance—and intolerance is a species of violence—to believe that your religion is superior to other religions."

Finally, as was noted above, Gandhi regarded non-violence as the only way to realize God—Truth. Asserting the unity of politics and religion, Gandhi insisted on the morality of political action. In everyday life, however, the union of religion and politics resulted in quite the opposite, bringing disunity and bloodshed instead of peace and brotherhood.

A dear price was paid for India's independence: the country was divided on the religious principle, and Pakistan was established in 1947.

This division was accompanied by fierce inter-societal conflicts. Every day Gandhi called on his compatriots to be brothers tolerant to other religions, but the reply he got more and more often (both from Indians and Moslems) was "Gandhi murdabad!", or "Death to Gandhi!" It was then that Gandhi declared his 16th hunger strike, from January 12 to 18, 1948. On obtaining a promise for reconciliation he agreed to accept food. On January 30 when he was on his way to his prayer meeting a man stepped out and shot him dead.

The exponent of ahimsa was killed, the gaining of independence was not bloodless and the religious conflicts grew into harsh strife, causing the death of hundreds of thousands of people.

Did life itself demonstrate the impotence of Gandhi's ideals? Were his efforts a waste of time and the self-sacrifice of his supporters futile?

The answer to this question is important not only for assessing the historical facts of the past. It stirs up contemporary thought and conscience.

I think that this answer was partly provided by Gandhi himself. "The only hope for the suffering world," he wrote on 15 July, 1947, foretelling his tragic death, "is the specific and direct way of non-violence. Millions, like me, may experience failure in the attempt to prove the truth by the loss of their own life, but this will be their own failure, not the failure of the eternal law".

Would it be fair to consider Gandhi's experiment with Truth a complete failure? Didn't the Mahatma awaken his compatriots' self-awareness? Didn't he fill them, who were downtrodden, unarmed and devoid of any hope, with faith in the strength of the spirit and the ability to combat evil? Didn't he try to unite all, irrespective of their caste, class or religion, in a mighty national liberation movement? Didn't he disarm many of his opponents with an example of "suffering" without "revenge"?

At first sight Gandhi might seem a hopeless idealist, but in actual fact he was "a dreamer standing firm on the ground" or "an idealist who was the most practical person." There are quite a few convincing examples of his political realism. Here is an extract from his letter to the British Viceroy. "Half of India is too weak to offer violent resistance," he wrote on 1 August, 1920, "and the other half is unwilling to do so. I have therefore ventured to suggest the remedy of non-cooperation."

Judging by Gandhi's behaviour at the beginning of his political career (participation on the English side in the Boer War, in suppressing the Zulu rebellion, in recruiting Indians to support the metropolitan country during World War I, and so on), non-violence became a credo for him only later: at first it was but a tactical device. However, after proclaiming ahimsa as the basic principle, he remained true to it to the end of his days.

He fully realized that the idea of non-violence would not triumph in the near future. "I know that the progress of non-violence is, in all probability, an extremely slow progress", he wrote in 1939, but experience has convinced me that this is the

most reliable way to the common purpose. Violence, even to defend justice, has become obsolete. With this conviction in mind I will go my way alone if I am not destined to have supporters in my infinite faith in non-violence.

A distinctive feature of Gandhi's stand on non-violence was its development from a political method into Truth, the truth he sought all his life and tried to realize in practice. He discovered for himself and revived for others the long-forgotten humanitarian value—respect for the sacred gift of life. In the wake of the prophets of the past, he reminded humanity of the commandment "Do not kill".

Non-violence is an ideal and a guiding star lighting humanity's way in the darkness. Truth should be repeated so long as there are people who do not believe in it. □

GANDHI—THE IMMORTAL BEACON OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Mahendra C. Vinod Sharma

About a century and a quarter has elapsed since a frail baby boy was born to Putlibai and Karam Chand in the city of Porbandar, Kathiawar, Western India.

No one could envisage at that time that this child would develop into the most formidable adversary of British imperialism. Who could predict that the timid adolescent would advocate non-violent resistance as a means of achieving independence for India? Who could imagine that he would become the greatest political and spiritual leader and social reformer? No one could have visualized that he would flourish into pre-eminent leader of Indian nationalism and the paramount prophet of ahimsa (non-violence) in the 20th century.

It is astounding, however, that a Mahatma who advocated and practised the principle of non-violence himself fell a victim to violence! A man who devoted most of his life fighting for peace, who loved his adversaries and even avoided trampling on an insect, had been fatally shot by one of his own countrymen. The Mahatma fell to the ground sighing "Oh God"! It was on a black Friday—30 January, 1948 when the maniac put an end to his life!

Gandhi's long service in South Africa made him politically active. He commanded political domination which was never before accomplished by any leader in India. Under Gandhi's direc-

tion the Indian National Congress became a competent mechanism of nationalism. It employed the weapon of non-cooperation with the British Government. Gandhi was arrested on charges of sedition and imprisoned.

To rouse the people of India to follow the path of non-violence Gandhi undertook fasts on several occasions and he almost always achieved his objectives.

Fiji Indians have had similar experience.

The British Government brought 60,553 Indian indentured labourers from India in 87 ships over a period of 37 years. The emigrant Indians had to sign a five-year agreement and worked mainly for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company.

Not all the Indians who left India reached Fiji. Some died of natural reasons before they arrived at their destination while others committed suicide when the conditions they were put into became intolerable.

On 24 March, 1875 the Secretary of State for India, Lord Salisbury, prepared a contract named 'Salisbury Despatch' outlining the conditions of employment of the indentured labourers and submitted it to the Government of India for their approval.

Section 15 of the agreement mentioned that after completing their five-year contracts the emigrant Indians could either return to India or stay in Fiji permanently if they accepted the conditions laid down by the Fiji Government.

Section 17 dealt with freedom and affirmed that the Indian settlers would be granted the same privileges which were enjoyed by the other subjects of Her Majesty in the Crown Colony.

A European member of the Legislative Council, H.M. Hedstrom had said in the Parliament—"Every attempt should be made to persuade the free Indians to settle permanently in Fiji. Conditions must be made so conducive that they never have the desire to return to India. Without them Fiji will remain unoccupied. If they are not given leases for independent farming, they would prefer to go back to India."

The indentured labourers were accommodated in small deplorable rooms in coolie lines. Wages were low and working hours long and tiring. Daily contracts were difficult to complete. The able helped the weak, and those who could not complete their tasks were whipped and mercilessly beaten.

The number of females did not match that of the males, therefore, many domestic and social problems emerged. The European overseers took advantage of helpless women. Many

were raped in isolation. At times men and women retaliated and beat up the overseers and their accomplices. Some women who were raped preferred to kill themselves rather than face indignity at home.

Pandit Tota Ram Sanadhya came to Fiji as an indentured labourer and when he returned to India, he wrote *Fiji Mein Mere Ikkis Varsh* (My 21 years in Fiji) which gave a complete insight into the emigrant Indians' quandaries.

The Government of India became aware of the hardships encountered by the emigrants. Shri Niwas Shastri, Deenbandhu C.F. Andrews, Pandit Hridayanath Kunzru and Dr. Mani Lal visited Fiji and compiled reports. The Raju Commission also submitted a comprehensive report of their findings to the Indian Government and enlightened it regarding the injustices practised there.

Mahatma Gandhi and his contemporary political leaders played a vital role in getting the indenture system abolished.

Fiji became independent in 1970 and the Alliance Party ruled for about 17 years. A coalition formed between the National Federation Party and Fiji Labour Party in 1987 decisively defeated the Alliance by a 28/24 majority. Dr. Timothi Bavandra's Party unanimously selected him as Prime Minister of Fiji. Unlike the Alliance Party, he set up his cabinet with 15 ministers—7 Fijians, 7 Indians and 1 General Elector.

Many Fijians could not endure the Indian dominated Bavandra Government. The Taukei Movement, a Fijian extremist party, worked round the clock emitting venom, criticising and finding ways and means of dethroning the Government. The rebels did not accept the Bavandra Government and spread the rumour that since Bavandra was not a Fijian chief, the Fijians did not have to recognize him.

On Thursday, 14 May, 1987, at 10.00 a.m. Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rambuka executed a coup d'état, deposed the Government members and set up an interim military government which lasted a full five-year term. Thus the second indenture system began on the fifth generation of the earlier emigrants. The Indians were demoted to third class citizens overnight.

Dr. Bavandra followed Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of satyagraha—fighting against the military rulers non-violently. In the footsteps of Gandhi Dr. Bavandra did not believe in 'an eye for an eye' philosophy.

A lot of external backing was received by the Coalition but

its restoration was out of question. Even the head of the Commonwealth of Nations, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, refused to meet Dr. Bavandra's delegation in London. Her Majesty's private secretary listened to their grievances instead.

Dr. Bavandra died of cancer on Friday, 3 November, 1989. Thus was extinguished Fiji's light of democracy.

Nearly 65,000 mourners took part in his funeral on 8 November. That was the largest crowd of mourners ever recorded in Fiji. Delegates from 15 countries participated in his last rites and the Government of India was fittingly represented.

The interim military government severed its cordial ties with the British Government and declared Fiji a republic. The 1970 constitution was abrogated. The 1990 substitute is feudalistic, undemocratic and unconstitutional.

Fiji's attempt to re-enter the Commonwealth was boycotted by India. Fiji was reminded that it had to amend its unfair constitution before it could be accepted back into the Commonwealth of Nations.

The fifth generation Indians are so naturalised that they should now be recognised as indigenes. Fiji is their motherland.

The emigrant Indians in South Africa, Fiji and other former colonies had faced similar predicaments. But South Africa got rid of its apartheid while Fiji has taken a retrograde step whereby it has adopted a policy of racial discrimination even in this last decade of the 20th century.

Paying tribute to Gandhiji, Pandit Nehru had said, "That light (Gandhi) represented the living truth, and the eternal man was with us with his eternal truth reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom".

The formidable torch of non-violent resistance lit by Gandhiji should never be allowed to extinguish, it should rather be utilised to maintain peace and harmony which the people of this century so badly need. □

GANDHI'S HOLISTIC VISION OF LIFE

Srimati Kamala

Today, nations the world over join alliances for peace while trading armaments and concocting plans of destruction so awesome and terrible as to destroy systems of life on this planet for generations. While Mahatma Gandhi's is the most universally quoted voice for peace in the United Nations, we seem to make a mockery of his ideas for making peace.

What was Gandhi's peace? Was it "not of this world"? Impractical? Is morality inexpedient to politics? Gandhi himself faced the charge: "Politics is not for *sadhus*," he was told by Tilak in 1918.

Most certainly the peace Gandhi sought was a metaphysical reality: A spiritual law that enables beneficial things to happen; a cosmic order that becomes practicable by human nature which is parcel of it. And simply put, Gandhi's peace-maker is one who is himself at peace with his Maker, who knows himself, and who maintains a reverence for all life.

We can only understand how to make the peace Gandhi sought by seeing Gandhi himself as an *Advaitist*—as one totally committed to belief in the absolute oneness of all that lives—this may seem abstract or impractical at first, but it is not. In fact, it is the very essence of all that Gandhi thought and lived.

Let me first draw to mind three critical issues of vital, practical

concern to everyone of us today. Then let us see how only by this very comprehensive or holistic philosophy of Gandhiji's can we find a way to face them with understanding and wisdom.

First, Nature: Undisturbed, Nature maintains a relative balance of cooperative and competitive existence. Yet, by man's predatory imposition on Nature, one-third of the earth's land is already desert; the rest is eroding unceasingly. Greed or shortsightedness compels acceleration of agricultural production by means which yield food that is organically unwholesome to the consumer and to the land. Industrialized waste pollutes air and waterways and wreaks havoc on all societies.

Second, our Societies: We would all agree to the abolition of absolute poverty, hunger and want. But does that mean modernization and the triumph of Western materialism?

The third point I'm going to develop more fully. What about our values and sense of justice? The very term "developing countries" indicates worldwide confusion over basic human values of work. What constitutes "development"? To live is to grow, but towards what goal? Certainly in the West we also seek to develop, but does our development require mass production, factories and urban sprawl; large-scale chemical agriculture; drug- and surgery-based health care; endless pursuit of consumer-oriented growth?

Now let us examine the wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi: Gandhi called himself a follower of the ancient ideal of "Sanathan Dharma". "Sanathan" identifies reality as Eternal and Omnipresent. "Dharma" is its cosmic unfoldment as Principle or Law.

Gandhi said: "There is an orderliness in the universe; there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is no blind law, for no blind law can govern the conduct of living beings."

For Gandhi, man's effort and responsibility to find his place in the harmonious and perfect cosmic plan constitute his destiny or his religion, called by whatever name. He often cited his most favorite scripture, the *Isha Upanishad*, which instructs that, indeed, heaven itself can only be attained by reconciling life in this finite world with the Infinite. In that we realize our oneness with all that lives.

By wise utilization of the objects of the finite world one gains freedom of mind, and by the right realization of the Infinite he attains the liberation of the Self.

These concepts are the foundation of the practices of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *satyagraha* (adherence to Truth): basically, a reverence for the indwelling life of all.

Gandhi was surrounded by religious lore and experience which awakened in him deep reverence for the non-violent life. I recall a story from the life of Buddha that must have been known to Gandhiji: It describes Buddha as a young renunciate in a forest happening upon a beautiful bird that had just been wounded by a hunter's arrow and lies suffering to death. Buddha prays lovingly and heals the young animal, but the eager hunter breaks into the tender scene to retrieve his prey. "Give him to me. He's mine. I killed him," demands the hunter.

"He's mine," responds the Buddha, "for I gave him life."

Gandhi felt that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man—especially from the cruelty of man.

Gandhi revered Nature and he prayed for its indwelling spirit to purify and to heal him—physically, mentally and spiritually. He said:

Far more indispensable than food for the physical body is [this] nourishment for the soul. One can do without food for a considerable time, but a man of the spirit cannot exist for a single second without spiritual nourishment.

Just as this physical purification is necessary for the health of the body, even so spiritual purification is necessary for the health of the soul.

I have shared the soul-stirring devotions at dawn along the Ganga River at Varanasi in India, when thousands of devout people bow to the Dawn, addressing the processes and powers of creation as kin. Usha, the Dawn, lifts her gaze over the horizon and illumines the world of man with her embrace of living light. Devotees enter the river to bathe with the prayer that the holy stream of life may purify and bless them with the realization that the same divine power links life within and without. The ritual is as old as the Vedic Age, whose truth was proclaimed in the *Mandukya Upanishad*: "The soul of man is of identical nature with the God of the universe."

Gandhi's ideas about health were not based on vanity or attachment to life in the physical body, but, once again, on the natural order of the world. The body is a gift from God, a temporary garment or possession of the Soul, for the service of self-unfoldment. As embodied spirits our well-being is related to the life around us. Gandhi was convinced that disease can be prevented (or cured)

if one lives more consciously in harmony with nature's forces.

Whenever he could Gandhi slept under the open skies, and he purposely held his prayer meetings on open ground where all devotees meet God together in the sacred cathedral of Nature—where there are no separations of religious distinction, no artificial barriers to the spirit.

I think he was the first in India to promote what we in America call "health food stores", the Khadi Gramodyog Bhavans where whole, unprocessed foods are available. He wore only "ahimsa" leather sandals from cows that had died a natural death, and he promoted fabrication of only "ahimsa" silk from cocoons whose worms were allowed to mature to fly away instead of being killed.

Wisely, Gandhi discerned what I would call a moral appropriateness of our conduct with nature:

Contrary to the Hindu precept of non-killing [he said]... I felt it was quite moral to kill serpents, bugs and the like... But one thing took deep root in me—the conviction that morality is the basis of things and that truth is the substance of all morality.

Gandhi's practical ideas about work and economics derive clearly from his deep reverence for the unity of life. He would ask us: Does your work respect the essential symbiosis of life? Does it give hope for a better life? Does it remove difficulties and suffering? Does it raise your moral and spiritual consciousness?

Our work has a threefold spiritual purpose or value: First, it joins us to the universe of unfolding life (nature and society); hence, it is a service. Second, it draws forth the creative potential of the human soul; hence, it is constructive and progressive. Third, when it is performed without attachment (i.e., greed, desire for recognition, pleasure or rewards) it is self-liberating.

O Bharata, the ignorant ones, desirous of personal good, perform actions with sensory attachment. But the wise work with an impersonal attitude and spiritual vision for the good of all beings.

(*Srimad-Bhagavad-Gita* III. 25.)

Gandhi observed that Nature in its economic wisdom instinctively fulfills the primary needs of hunger, shelter, procreation and growth. The continuous "work" of Nature is a perfect socio-economic system: It is predictable, cooperative and organized. Its wages are honest, and its participants serve a common cause, though unconsciously.

We humans by definition utilize the additional dimension

of free will, with a consciousness that is both creative and introspective. This God-given distinction makes us the moral custodians for the welfare of nature as well as our human society. Our trouble as humans in this natural work force is twofold: We're free to choose or assign work, and we determine the wages for our efforts.

Typically he looked to the Cosmic Whole for the standard of human conduct, saying that everything has come from God and belongs to God. Therefore all things must be for all God's people—as a whole.

Poverty was never Gandhi's standard of spirituality. Riches do not harm *per se*, but as a form of power they may be used in a beneficial or harmful way. When an individual earns more than his proportional needs he should feel that he is a trustee of that surplus portion for God's people and for God's purpose.

He wanted the rich to employ wealth in service of society. He was never for expropriating or liquidating the rich; he wanted them to utilize their skills and talents voluntarily in honest and fruitful ways for the country.

Thus, for Gandhi there should be no feud between the personal and social aims and spiritual goals. Only those pursuits unrelated to the spiritual whole are unrighteous. For instance, living in total pursuit of the evanescent glories of the world is unwholesome. As worldly wealth itself is impermanent, to pursue prosperity alone is to disengage life from the Eternal.

What Gandhi brought to life was interdisciplinary a symbiotic, holistic approach—a spiritual GNP—a unity of God-Nature-Person. He urged us to be spiritual, respecting the cosmic unfoldment of life. And he urged us to be rational, to “work” with Nature, the material *alma mater* of life; to value its irreplaceable resources; to discontinue privileges and subsidies in the economy because this is contrary to the natural law.

Almost a century ago, he urged us to use only “positive” technology—the sun, air, water and earth—as much as possible instead of continually, thoughtlessly squandering our non-renewable resources. His ancient wisdom was truly visionary, for such sensible and obvious suggestions are the message of our ecologists today. From Gandhi they were based on a reverence for the oneness of life and the human aspiration for a higher human consciousness of that spiritual reality.

I think Gandhi raised our consciousness of peace to the light of pure divinity:

The greatest power in the world is that of the Soul. Peace is its highest expression. To attain peace, first we must acquire greater mastery over ourselves. We secure then an atmosphere of perfect peace, calm and goodwill that protects and fortifies ourselves and blesses others around us.

“Mastery over ourselves” is the key phrase. Violence erupts in the world as it does within ourselves and in our families: Out of fear, self-forgetfulness, greed, selfishness, chaos, disorder, insecurity. Gandhi’s peace is a powerful reminder that if charity begins at home, peace does also.

If we tolerate violence, untruth, selfishness in the world around us, it is because we have not the courage to practice peace, truth, selflessness in our personal and daily relations.

Gandhi’s personal practices of “making peace” were many: By acknowledging his heeding of the “still small voice” of his consciousness of peace within. He also set the practice of daily prayer meetings and, though a man of intense and almost continuous action, he tried to observe one day of silent self-examination per week to establish his own inner peace. Even his vegetarianism—originally followed only out of acceptance of a cast injunction—he evolved to a practice of man’s responsibility to care for lower animals and thus to uphold God’s plan for a *peaceable* kingdom throughout nature.

The popular misunderstanding about Gandhi’s non-violence is still that it is a group contrivance, enforceable by sheer numbers. Would-be “satyagrahis” have exploited “noncooperation” to what is a kind of political blackmail. Gandhi admonished against the use of so-called “non-violence” as coercion which makes adversaries of the parties and then becomes a kind of punishment.

What the Mahatma left with us was not the *politics*, but the *life* of peace, for which we must change *values*, not policies. We call the Native American Indians “savages” who used spears or lighted arrows to attack plundering invaders of their land; we call ourselves “civilized” who develop megaton bombs which can kill easily 100,000 people and maim generations and destroy biology and animals for hundreds of square miles. Gandhi would have us search our history, our communication, our daily expression for truer ideals.

Gandhi was not afraid to see all issues as spiritual ones. Wouldn’t we thoughtfully have to admit that the greatest world problems—environmental, political, commercial, social—derive from—are *not* separate from—spiritual problems? Although given

to “masterminds” of high-powered business, engineering and international politics, they are spiritual issues, requiring an integrated approach—an elevation of consciousness to a comprehensive realization of the oneness of life.

Peacemakers such as Mahatma Gandhi follow a way of life where further perpetuation of misery is avoided. For this, one is not concerned merely with changing the social order; he is primarily seeking that which is True. Since Truth itself is a positive force, that very search has a transforming effect on society

Allow me to close with words of Gandhi:

Peace requires one first to be brave enough to love another, to tolerate another, and to trust another. That requires faith in oneself, One has not the strength to be peaceful if he is fighting the internal duel of selfish desires. Good can never result from evil desires or actions; hence, the *Gita's* central teaching of the oneness of the means and ends. The practice of peace is thus a test of the sincerity of our hearts; it requires solid and silent self-sacrifice, honesty and the capacity for diligent work, but must be realized first in its source within.

The Gandhi Center administers a one-year Correspondence Course in the United States on Gandhi's life, thought and work leading to a certificate from the Gujarat Vidyapith (the university in Gandhi's home state founded by him in 1920). It is the only such course existing outside India. □

GANDHI AND VINOBA*

U. Bissoondoyal

When Gandhi reached India on 9th January 1915 after an absence of 21 years in South Africa, he had already socialised himself into the role of political and spiritual leader and had already expressed his views on the future of India in "*Hind Swaraj*" in 1910; as Fatima Meer says he had already been apprenticed as a Mahatma. However, he listened to the advice of Gokhale,

I having been out of India for so long, have no business to form any definite conclusion about matters essentially Indian, and that I should pass some time here, as an observer and a student.

Over the following year the rediscovery of India was to take him to the Bombay Presidency of Gokhale and Tilak (whom he would compare in all humility to the Ganges and the Himalayas), to the UP of Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, to the Bengal of Tagore who opened the abode of peace to him and his South African followers. They called each other Mahatma and Gurudev. He went to the Madras of Annie Besant and Rajagopalachari, where later in Madurai he would adopt the loin-cloth, and to his native Gujarat where he would set up his Satyagraha Ashram, first at Cochrab, then at Sabarmati.

It is interesting to note how the three personalities Jamnalal Bajaj, Nehru and Vinoba who will be intimately linked to him

* The Gandhi Memorial Lecture delivered on 2nd October, 1994 on the occasion of the 125th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and of the Centenary year of Vinoba Bhave.

relate to Gandhi at that time. Jamnalal Bajaj who will symbolise Gandhi's ideal of the merchant prince and who together with Birla will make him explore his idea of trusteeship to its limits had right from 1915 been fascinated by Gandhi's discipline, assumption of poverty and austerity and contributed to the construction of the Sabarmati Ashram.

Whenever I wrote of wealthy men becoming trustees of their wealth for the common good I always had this merchant prince principally in mind.

Nehru on the other hand was little impressed by Gandhi in 1916 although he was aware of his work in South Africa. He had met Gandhi at the Lucknow Congress in December 1916:

He seemed very distant and different and unpolitical to many of us young men.

1916, on the other hand, marks the beginning of the Gandhi-Vinoba relationship. A restlessness had already taken hold of Vinoba. He had burnt all his certificates, ready for a yag for the country, and it was terrorism that first tempted the later apostle of non-violence:

It was an early ambition of mine to distinguish myself by a violent deed in the service of the country.

The restlessness took him to Banaras.

Fate had it that M.K. Gandhi was making his first major public speech at the inauguration of the Banaras Hindu University on 6 February 1916. The speech which had taken to task the élite for their alienation from the land of their birth, ended with:

I compare with the richly bedecked noblemen the millions of the poor. And I feel like saying to those noblemen: There is no salvation for India unless you strip yourselves of this jewellery and hold it in trust for your countrymen in India.

Vinoba read about those words in the Press. He had found his leader and joined Gandhi at his Kochrab Ashram on 7th June. He created an immediate impression on Gandhi who wrote to his father (*whose sons would all become brahmacharis in the service of society*).

Your son has acquired at so tender an age such high-spiritedness and ascetism as took me years of patient labour to do.

Vinoba's *brahmachari*, or living in Brahma as he called it, would be a reference to Gandhi all his life.

Vinoba's discipline and Sanskrit learning which he was to deepen for a year struck Gandhi. Vinoba, like Jamnalal Bajaj later, requested Gandhi to accept him as a son. Knowing full well that this request was a 'voluntary surrender', Gandhi prophetically said:

In my view a father is, in fact, a father only when he has a son who surpasses him in virtue. A real son, likewise, is one who improves on what the father has done; if the father is truthful, firm of mind and compassionate, the son will be all this in a greater measure. This is what you have made yourself... Hence I accept the role you offer to me as a gift of love. I shall strive to be worthy of it.

In 1917 Gandhi was already describing him to C.F. Andrews as "one of the few pearls in the ashram:"

In a letter to Vinoba Bhave (1.1. 1933) he will reiterate this conviction:

You will be the instrument of some great service to the people.

His *sadhana* in the ashram cured him of his wildness and he developed, in the words of Mahadev Desai:

his sturdy asceticism, his profound religious and philosophic bearing, his matchless, power of penance and self-discipline and a rare humility...

Vinoba had so far been deeply influenced by Adi Shankaracharya and Sant Gnaneswar. Gandhi would make up the saintly trinity.

When in 1921 Jamnalal Bajaj wanted Gandhi to open a branch of the Satyagraha Ashram in Wardha, it is Vinoba who is chosen. Gandhi recognizing the singleness of purpose, the emphasis on celibacy and discipline of the Wardha Ashram, as opposed to the more varied Sabarmati Ashram, was saying in 1925:

Ashrams like this one are established so that such a way of life in complete harmony with *dharma* may prevail everywhere. I have, therefore, always cherished the hope that these ashrams will serve as instruments for raising the country and teaching and spreading true *dharma*.

The conception of the ashram was central to both Gandhi and Vinoba:

It fostered an attitude of detachment towards all things and developed inner awareness. It also lay emphasis on Karmayoga... It conducted experiment from which society benefitted.

It served both the aims of spiritual development and social welfare. Wardha was a more spiritual version of ashram life. In the same way that Gandhi felt that Nehru would speak his language after he was gone, he felt that Vinoba would take over Sewagram:

Who can say that after I am dead even Vinoba may not possibly make the place his own? If he survives me his loyalty and his non-violence will not permit him to leave Sewagram.

As the work of social reconstruction became important, particularly as far as the eradication of untouchability was concerned, in 1932 Vinoba left Wardha for Nalwadi to live and work in a village of Harijans. From Nalwadi he would make *padayatras* to the villages around for 14 days every month. They would all come together at Nalwadi on the 15th day to discuss this experience. It was also a spiritual exercise to him. He compared such a tour to *pradakshina*, i.e. where the devotee goes round the idols in a temple. "The people of the villages are like our deity." Gandhi recognized this role of Vinoba:

Your *swadharma* at present is to work for removal of untouchability.

It is to Vinoba that Gandhi will write when in 1933 he proposes a chain of fasting:

If the right men and women join in the fasts, the movement for the removal of untouchability will make rapid progress.

Vinoba is sent to open up the Hindu temples to the Harijans in Vaikom in 1924. Vaikom was not far from Adi Shankaracharya's village, Kalady. By his combination of *jnana*, *bhakti* and *karma* and his "extraordinary, glowing *vairagya*", Shankaracharya remained his ideal in life. He related the experience later:

That night, when I went to bed, that village of Kalady and the image of Shankaracharya stood before my eyes again and again. I could not sleep. That experience is still with me, as fresh today as it was then...

Vinoba's claim to greatness is also in the line of the great *rishis* of India.

Gandhi kept Vinoba away from the political struggle which was dominated by Nehru and a host of others and made him concentrate on the work of social reconstruction which was more important to him. However in response to the indifference of the British government to constitutional advance in 1940, Gandhi said he wanted to launch his last civil disobedience struggle which he

wanted to be as “*flawless as possible*”. He did not want to launch a mass movement because of the war:

I had to strive to produce the highest quality irrespective of the quantity.

When he chose his first *satyagrahi*, he had in mind not the most famous, but the purest and his choice fell on Vinoba Bhave and he explained that choice in the *Harijan* (20.10.1940) Jawaharlal Nehru was to follow him on 7th November. It was the greatest tribute that Gandhi had paid him publicly.

In a statement to the Press (21.10.1940) Gandhi said:

Those who hug untouchability and regard communal unity as impossible or who believe neither in the *charka* nor in the village industries and, therefore, in the regeneration of the 600,000 villages—for such Vinoba is of no use.

Vinoba established himself as the leader of the constructive movement away from the public view. He would never have come forward had Gandhi not died:

Had Bapu been alive to-day I would not have come out but remained engrossed in my various works of service.

To Gandhi *swaraj* was not important in itself. In his last testament he said:

The Congress has achieved political freedom, but it has yet to achieve social, economic and moral freedom in terms of the millions.

He wanted the Congress to dissolve itself or to merge into a *Lok Sevak Sangh* and to regroup all workers engaged in constructive and social work. In this way the Congress would undergo a metamorphosis and dedicate itself to constructive work. *Swaraj* which had motivated the nation would cease to be a source of inspiration. A new focus of service had to be found.

Although Nehru had referred to *Khadi* as the livery of freedom and had made statements on village industries, *nai talim* etc., he saw them “more as temporary expedients of a transition stage rather than as solution to our vital problems.” His concerns were democracy in the Western sense, a planned economy that stressed socialism, industrialisation and scientific development, non-alignment, secularism. It was left to Vinoba to *construct the other half of India’s freedom*.

The work of social reconstruction as envisaged by Gandhi fell more and more on the shoulders of Vinoba and other Gandhians. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Republic

of India called a meeting of all eminent constructive workers at Sewagram after Gandhi's death and Vinoba decided to found a *sarvodaya samaj*. After taking up the work of rehabilitation of refugees for 10 months in Delhi, East Punjab, Rajasthan and Bombay. Vinoba decided to take the pulse of the whole nation and travelled to UP, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh.

To Gandhi *sarvodaya* was more important than independence. He had translated Ruskin's *Unto This Last* in Gujarati as *Sarvodaya*—the welfare of all, as opposed as to the greatest good of the greatest number of the utilitarians. Gandhi had read his own convictions into Ruskin. As Vinoba points out, the proper rendering of *Unto This Last* would be *antyodaya Uplift of last* rather than *sarvodaya*. It means the rise, the awakening (*udaya*), of all (*sarva*). *Sarvodaya* is based on man's moral and spiritual nature, standing for self-governing, self-sufficient and co-operative society where man has learnt 'the art of living for others'.

The ashrams of Gandhi and Vinoba prepared people for this task—people 'who believe in the indivisible and harmonious character of human good and in the non-violent means to attain it', people trained in truth, non-violence, *asteya* (non-stealing), *aparigraha* (non-possession), and *brahmacharya*, who have sublimated their desires into service. This *shantisena* dedicated to the service of the people would be in the words of Lanza del Vasto:

sovereigns without crown and throne, without a capital and army, and even without hearth and home... the dynasty of kings of the poor, ruling by the divine right of sanctity, the true representatives of the people...

The *Shantisena* would reach one out of every 5000 becoming the hearts of the people and part of their family:

The volunteers who offer themselves must be acquainted with Indian and world thought, and must be given training in ways of carrying on different kinds of service.

The *Shanti Sainiks* must have faith in truth and non-violence, must be fearless and prepared to risk their lives and must not be involved in power and party politics. They must believe in *Samyayoga*, namely, that the spirit is equally immanent in all beings.

An army of the peace (*Shantisena*) was important to help in the transformation of society:

It is only when a large group of people...aloof from positions of political power, but...endowed with the power of discretion and

devoted in every way to service, sacrifice and study is formed on a permanent basis that the task of purifying... would be accomplished.

Vinoba also came to believe that teachers also play an important role in the sustenance and transformation of society. Addressing teachers in 1967 he said:

The moral leadership of the country should be in the hands of teachers: They must show themselves capable of ridding the land of its miseries—of poverty, disease, ignorance and ever-increasing violence.

This led him to found the *Acharyakul* on 6th March 1968. It would ensure:

- That the moral status and social status of teachers should be raised.
- That it should be fully accepted that education should enjoy the same independence as the judiciary.
- That the power of the people should be established opposed to the power of violence and distrust from that of law.
- That attitudes and dispositions conducive to world peace should be fostered.
- That teachers should be pioneers of the non-violent revolution.

If the constructive work of reforming society could rest also on the *acharyas*, the soul of India would have changed.

What did the constructive programme involve? It meant working towards the removal of untouchability, which Gandhi saw as the greatest blot on Hinduism and on the nation, bringing about unity between Hindu and Muslim, village sanitation, basic education, the liberation of women, the promotion of provincial and of the national languages, removing the differences between rich and poor, and above all bringing about economic equality, *the master-key to non-violent independence*.

Addressing the village workers in 1935, Gandhi exhorts them:

Make Vinoba your ideal here. It is impossible for you to emulate his learning or to have his wonderful memory, but you can certainly emulate his industry and devotion to work. There need to be no despair in a field which Vinoba has made his own and where he has given the best of his 15 years.

Gandhi had seen *division* as the greatest evil of India:

Division between Hindu and Muslim, between rich and poor, between the upper and the lower classes, between men of caste and outcastes.

All this because of lack of love. That is why Vinoba who throughout his life has "been motivated by the sole purpose of achieving a union of hearts" wanted a civilisation founded on love. *I want the kingdom of kindness* he said. The Christ had spoken of the kingdom of God, but God is beyond us.

In spite of all the efforts of Gandhi since 1919, the Hindu and Muslim communities were at war; Vinoba took up communal unity with the same passion as Gandhi. In order to know the mind of Islam he gave one year to the study of the Koran in the original. He learnt Arabic "to cultivate a living contact with the Muslims in the neighbourhood". He produced, "The essence of the Koran" which even the most exacting of the Islamic scholars, Abul Kalam Azad, could not fault. However he took it as a personal failure that although he had lived ten years in Paunar, he had not reached the hearts of the people and fundamental associations had come up. He also wrote "The essence of Christian teachings". The *Gita* which he had translated in Marathi because his mother could not understand the Sanskrit original, his 'Discourses on the Gita' his simplification of the Sikh teachings and the adoption of the prayer meetings so dear to Gandhi were an immense contribution to religious understanding. Like Gandhi, the attempt at religious understanding was conducted alongside a constant study and renewal of the Hindu faith. There also something like a revelation took place. While digging in the fields, Vinoba hit a stone. It turned out to be a statue of Bharat embracing the feet of Ram and Sita. It was installed at the Ashram. Eventually a Bharat-Ram temple was raised at the Paramdhan Ashram in Paunar. Jamnalal Bajaj had earlier wanted to open a Bharat temple.

It was from Wardha that the *Nai Talim* was launched, and the new basic education system was meant not only to save India from the denationalising and emasculating effect of the educational system deriving from Macaulay and Wood. It was meant:

to change, to revolutionise the present condition of the villages and establish economic and social equality.

Vinoba became a key figure in the *Nai Talim* scene experimenting on work education making sure there was no dualism between work and education, preparing textbooks on spinning, and giving it an important place in education.

Gandhi was appreciative of what he had done in that field alongside Ashadevi Aryanayakam.

I am not aware of anyone else among my colleagues who has carried out so many experiments in that direction as Vinoba has.

No one has tried more to bring about the *synthesis of knowledge and action in education* which Gandhi wanted. No one understood better than Vinoba that basic education is a new way of life based on a new set of social and economic values.

Vinoba also turned his attention to beggars and lepers. He trained Manohar Diwan to look after lepers and the latter founded the only institution run by an Indian near Wardha and this led Gandhi to decide:

I am deliberately introducing the leper as a link in the chain of constructive work.

The India of Gandhi's dreams also had a place for the cow who was to him a *poem of pity*. She was the giver of plenty, the symbol of the entire subhuman world, in fact a *unique contribution to the evolution of humanitarianism*. It is to Vinoba and Jamnalal Bajaj that he turns for the uplift of the cow, two apostles of renunciation who incarnated the principle of the *Isopanishad*.

Bajaj's last act of renunciation was to devote the rest of his life to this service of preservation of the cattle wealth of India. He died in harness. Jamnalal had become, like Vinoba, the son of the Mahatma and had entrusted his heart as well as his outward life to him.

The death of Jamnalal was fraught with great sadness. Janaki Devi wanted to commit *sati* in a moment of total loss and dependence, but Gandhi told her:

You can become a true *sati* by renouncing your all for the sake of his work.

As the pyre was burning, Gandhi brought her the comfort of renunciation:

You have now become penniless by surrendering your all to the Lord. You shall now eat only if your sons feed you, otherwise you will come to me and share my beggar's bowl... Henceforth, you shall live not for your own sake, but for Jamnalalji's work of *goseva*.

Saving the cow was important.

If we can save the cow we can save ourselves.

And he decided: "service of the cow we shall entrust to Vinoba."

After Gandhi's death Vinoba lamented that the overemphasis on work and on vows had limited the Gandhi tradition. There was a lack of study by Gandhians:

Gandhi's thought remained Gandhi's thought, it did not become our thought.

It made the task of continuity and renewal difficult. But such was not the case with Vinoba. Rajendra Prasad recognized that Vinoba's work:

is an extension of the efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and the further application of his method.

It is particularly in the objectification of Sarvodaya with its social and political implications that the greatness of Vinoba is to be seen. The starting point was the ancient Indian ideal which had become Gandhi's major concern, namely, how to recreate the village republics, marked by *unity, mutuality and harmony*.

Although Ruskin, Kropotkin, Proudhon offered images of mutualism and of a new social order, Vinoba found it in the Gita:

the idea of Sarvodaya, as preached by the Gita is to merge oneself in the good of all.

He Sanskritised many of his concepts. He was in pursuit of *Samyayoga* (which he had taken from the Gita) which teaches to do unto others what we do unto ourselves.

The Gandhi-Vinoba relationship was somewhat like that of Socrates-Plato or Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, where the disciples are almost at great as the masters and one finds it hard to decide where the thought of the master ends and that of the disciple begins, and where the disciples have consciously merged and lost themselves in the master.

Although Gandhi's ideas about sarvodaya and trusteeship contain in embryo Vinoba's action, we can say that from 1951 another Vinoba was born. Two events happened which have something of the nature of a revelation. In Pochampalli in the riot-torn Telengana, where the communists were asking people to take land by force, some untouchables came to him after he had talked to the villagers:

Instead of talking to us about peace, give us land and we will always live in peace.

He appealed to his audience. Rama Chandra Rao came forward and offered 100 acres. Vinoba recalls that moment later:

On that day, God gave me a sign. I meditated on it the whole of the following night...Without this hint on His part I should never have made up my mind to preach Bhu Dan, so impossible did it

seem to clever people to heal by this means one of the greatest sores of India and of the world. I should never have had the audacity for it, even if I'd the idea...

In his tour of 51 days in Hyderabad he passed through 200 villages and collected 12,201 acres. Another event fraught with the same religious significance happened later in the year in the village of Chaudahapur in Moradabad district. While he had gone to sleep, a blind man by the name of Ram Charan came after midnight and gave away the 12 bigas of land he had. He left as quietly as he had come. When Vinoba came to know of it, he said:

We should know that in Ram Charan's form, the Charan (feet) of Ram came to bless the Bhoodan yajna.

As he moved from place to place, new ideas, new movements came up: the idea of Bhoodan was launched in Hyderabad, that of Gramdan in Orissa, the idea of Gram Swaraj in Tamil Nadu and Shantisena in Kerala.

In 1952 he came to Bihar. By 1954 he had collected in the poorest state of India 2.23 million acres not far from his target of 3 million acres.

He concentrated in Bihar in order not to disperse his efforts; other places will learn from the example. Bihar was important to him because it was the land of non-violence, of Buddha and Mahavir, it is where Gandhi's movement started in India. It is where he had held his marches in favour of the untouchables. He wanted to establish a relation between Bhoodan and the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha had said:

Friends, never can enmity be overcome by enmity. It can only be extinguished by amity. This is the law Eternal.

He wanted to make Gaya the Bardoli of Bhoodan. Bhoodan was no *andolan* (movement), he said; it was an *aarohan* (ascension). He wanted to establish a Sarvodaya University at Bodh Gaya so that Bihar could become the source of inspiration for service unto others.

As a pilgrim goes to Tirtha Yatra for God's *darshan*—so also I have come out on the Bhoodan pilgrimage. I have come here to let you bring about a revolution on the basis of love. I have a desire that the land problem of Bihar should be solved during my stay here... If we are able to solve the land problem by the method of love and peace, it would earn credit for non-violence.

Overnight Vinoba became like a prophet and his language reflected this. He went to the people and asked them to regard him as their sixth son. He wanted to redistribute one-sixth of the land to the landless. That meant 50 million of acres. To many it was the voice of Gandhiji speaking. As Nehru said in 1958:

He represents, as none else does, the spirit and tradition of Gandhiji and of India.

His *padayatra* became charged with religious sensibility. Jay Prakash Narayan, whom many regarded as the successor of Nehru, made his *jeevandan* at Bodh Gaya in 1954, a voluntary acceptance of a simple life and work dedicated to the service of others. Twenty years later, in 1974, JP would launch his *total revolution* in Bihar embracing the social, economic, cultural, political, ideological, educational and spiritual fields—the seven revolutions in one.

The spiritual and prophetic dimension of Vinoba was taking over:

I came to speak for those who do not speak, to claim for those who claim nothing, for the poor, your brothers, who have been waiting in silence for centuries.

Lord Hallam Tennyson the grandson of the poet, came and wrote *Saint on the March*, Lanza del Vasto, the great Gandhian, wrote 'From Gandhi to Vinoba'.

His mission gradually broadened to the "five gifts". However, a gift was meaningful only if it was a *yajna*, a sacrifice. In this broader vision the haves and the have-nots can equally perform this *yajna*. The five gifts were:

Bhoodan: the giving of land.

Sampattidan: the giving of wealth, whereby the donor keeps a part of his wealth for the service of others.

gramdan: the giving of the village unto itself. By 1974 there were 100,000 *gramdan* villages. The first in the village of Mangroth.

Shramdan: the giving of labour by those who have neither land nor wealth.

Buddhidan: the gift of wisdom.

They formed the basis of Vinoba's quest for a rural Utopia. The political implications of Vinoba's movement are many. The end, as with Gandhi, remains the idea of *Gram Swaraj*, the village republic and its modern application of *Panchayati Raj*. Vinoba makes the difference between *rajniti*, the political system in the

centre as it exists and *lokniti* which represents the moral sense and social responsibility of the people. In its essence it means consensus democracy as opposed to rule by the majority; it does not mean capturing political power but dispersing it. Majority rule had come about because it was the antithesis of minority rule. The synthesis was government by all. In this task Vinoba wished that a 'strong force of non-partisans' should grow to exert moral pressure on both the government and on the opposition. Both are interested in power and therefore open to corruption.

The real corrective could come only from an incorruptible body of constructive workers who do not seek power and believe only in moral force.

The initiative rests with the village. Vinoba, like Gandhi, sees the real moral India in its 600,000 villages.

Both believed that unanimity coupled with satyagraha will solve the majority-minority problem of India. It has direct relevance to our own country. Gandhi kept on hoping:

May it be reserved to India to evolve the true science of democracy by giving a visible demonstration.

In the 1930s Gandhiji said he would not go back to Sabarmati until India won its *Swaraj*. On 15th April 1957 Vinoba made a vow at Kanyakumari:

I solemnly pledge this day at the feet of Kanyakumari, on the shore of the Indian Ocean and in the presence of Suryanarayan that as long as Gram-Swarajya is not established in India I shall continue my Yatra and ceaselessly carry on the efforts in that direction.

It avails little whether it was successful or not. Suffice it to say with Dr. Radhakrishnan that it was:

An act of faith that would bring a unity of mind, thought and purpose in India.

The final image of both master and disciple is that of saints on the march. Vinoba had remained a social reformer even in his death. The funeral pyre was lit by his adopted daughter, Mahadevi. The religious prayers were also said by the women ashramites of Paramdham Ashram. On the sides of the pyre were written the central values of his mission, "Satya-Prem-Karuna", his cry of one world "Jai Jagat" and the name of God 'Ram-Hari'. □

GANDHI'S CONCEPTS OF INDIVIDUAL CONDUCT AND SOCIAL LIFE

Dietmar Rothermund

For Mahatma Gandhi individual conduct was of central importance to his social philosophy. Western observers, but even his Indian contemporaries like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose, were often at a loss when faced with his emphasis on this point. Western philosophy tends to see the individual as an autonomous unit which is not intrinsically connected with other individuals. Accordingly social life has to be based on a contrived social contract supported by the enlightened self-interest of individual human beings. But Western philosophy also produced theories of social determinism. These theories assume that the autonomy of the individual is curtailed by outside forces which impose a rigid pattern on individual conduct and leave no scope for a free will.

The concepts of Western philosophy thus oscillate between individual freedom and social necessity. It proves to be difficult to bridge the gap between individual conduct and social life in this way. In fact, the determinists may find plausible arguments demonstrating the conditioning of individual conduct whereas it is hard to prove that individual conduct as such could make an impact on social life. The philosophical construction of social ethics on the basis of individual autonomy is a very problematic exercise as Kant's "categorical imperative" clearly shows. In order to avoid the pitfalls of mere reciprocity and of the unintended adverse

consequences of good deeds he introduces a double abstraction when he asks the individual to act in such a manner that the intention guiding his action could be made the basis of a general law. In other words, he urges the individual to imagine a social life compatible with the respective individual's conduct in such a way as to ensure that this conduct sustains and does not destroy it. The trouble with this autonomous projection is that it does not provide for a feedback.

Gandhi was obviously dissatisfied with what Western thought had to offer in this sphere, but he also did not opt for the easy way out provided by Vedantic monism which obliterates the distinction between the individual and society—and, therefore, fails to sustain social ethics. He rather looked for other elements in the Hindu tradition which do ascribe a powerful effect to individual conduct. The practice of penance (*tapasya*) and the commitment to a particular course of action by means of a vow are such elements. They make sense only as an integral part of individual conduct. Of course, they were normally considered to be directed towards individual salvation (*moksha*), but there are many references in Hindu mythology to such individual acts which had a deep impact on others—even on the gods of the Hindu pantheon. Gandhi firmly believed in the metaphysical efficacy of such individual acts. Even his vow of celibacy has to be seen in this context. He had not taken this vow simply for the sake of his own salvation, but hoped to gain spiritual powers with which he could influence the course of events also with regard to the fate of others. Similarly his great public fasts which his contemporaries often interpreted as means of moral coercion were conceived by him as acts of individual conduct which would have metaphysical consequences and thus have an impact on social life.

There are only stray and somewhat oblique references to this belief in Gandhi's writings and speeches. There are good reasons for his reticence to talk about this belief. Such references did not make sense in the public discourse of his time. Moreover, Gandhi was himself painfully aware of the fact that his spiritual powers were obviously not sufficient for reaching the aims which he had set for himself. He therefore preferred to talk about his "experiments with truth." However, his famous equations "Truth is the essence of the vow" and "God is truth" clearly indicate what he had in mind when talking about his "experiments with truth".

Gandhi's Autobiography as an Analysis of Individual Conduct

Writing an autobiography, as Gandhi did, was a rather Un-Indian activity—as Bhikhu Parekh has pointed out. According to him, Gandhi “Indianised” his autobiography by making it a record of introspection rather than a reflective account of his times as Jawaharlal Nehru did.¹ In fact, Gandhi's autobiography should be read as a searching analysis of his individual conduct, keeping in mind what has been said above about his belief in the spiritual efficacy of such conduct. Unlike an ascetic who withdraws from social life Gandhi had made all his “experiments” in the midst of social life often surrounded by acute social conflict. Therefore all his experiments were primarily social experiments. But instead of resorting to the usual methods of social analysis, he looked at his own individual conduct as if it were a seismograph registering the tremors of social life. “Introspection” was thus his instrument of social analysis. Like the Vedantic monists he also believed in the basic idea of “Advaita”, but he never lost sight of the distinctness of individual agency. However, there was a feedback unlike in Kant's universe which could only be constructed on the basis of individual autonomy.

Gandhi was not a philosopher nor was he very well read in the Vedas and Vedanta etc. He absorbed the concepts of Hindu philosophy and religion so to speak by osmosis. He once even stated that he appreciated the greatness of Hinduism only when reading Max Mueller. Coming from a devout Hindu like Gandhi this statement sounds odd, but he meant what he stated there. He was imbued with the spirit of Hindu religion with which he grew up in his home in Gujarat, but the “ism” was interpreted to him by Max Mueller. Gandhi never adopted a deductive approach of deriving the reasons for his thoughts and actions from a conceptual framework, but rather proceeded inductively by analysing his individual conduct. If he did not spell out the premises of his analysis, this was due to the reasons explained above.

Gandhi's Judgement: “Neutral to Scale”

Economists say that something is “neutral to scale” when its impact per unit remains the same regardless of the number of units concerned. Similarly Gandhi's judgement of conduct was “neutral to scale”. Apparently petty instances of personal interaction were of the same importance to him as national campaigns.

This is why the reader of his autobiography is often puzzled by the minute analysis of events of a very private kind to which Gandhi pays as much or even more attention as to public affairs of great consequence. The social microcosm of the ashram was the scene of many such small events which Gandhi analysed in detail.

An ashram is a typical Indian institution with a venerable past. Literally ashram means a place of (spiritual) exertion. The stages of life (ashramas) of student, householder, hermit are similarly phases of specific exertions in keeping with the duties of the respective stage. For Gandhi his ashram was always a laboratory for his experiments in social life as based on individual conduct. Phoenix Farm and Tolstoy Farm which he established in South Africa were not called ashrams by him, but they were practically ashrams such as the Satyagraha Ashram which he founded in India. Unlike the traditional Indian ashram which is so to speak self-centred and whose social life is obviously distinct from that of its mundane environment, Gandhi's ashrams always were conceived by him as microcosmic models for the social life beyond the confines of the ashram. In fact, they served as training grounds for the hard core of his co-workers on whom he relied when conducting his social and political campaigns. Satyagraha, the principle of his non-violent action, could only be sustained if it had become ingrained in the individual conduct of the *satyagrahi*—and this required conscious restraint in personal interactions just as much as in the face of a violent adversary. This is why Gandhi spent so much thought on discipline in the ashram and was concerned with minute manifestations of social conflict. His co-workers were not always able to live up to his expectations and he was deeply troubled by this. If individual conduct was not in tune with social life in the ashram as he envisioned it, how could it serve as a model for the outside world? Speaking of a model in this context may be misleading, because Gandhi certainly did not expect all Indians to live in ashrams, but he believed that the *satyagrahis* trained in his ashram would be agents of social change and conflict resolution in the world beyond the ashram and if they could not live up to the standards of conduct set by Gandhi, they would be unable to perform this task.

Gandhi's problem was that all these exertions did not just have a long-term educational aim, but an immediate purpose: the liberation of India from foreign rule. This often introduced a streak of impatience in his quest for the disciplined conduct of his co-

workers. In fact, the freedom struggle was of such importance to Gandhi that he was even prepared to substitute the ethics of political responsibility for the ethics of conviction which otherwise informed his conduct.

The Ethics of Responsibility versus the Ethics of Conviction

Towards the end of his life Gandhi was faced with the challenge of the atom bomb.² The threat of ultimate violence embodied in this weapon seemed to be beyond the reach of the spiritual power of individual conduct. Its very existence in the hands of the Americans might enable them to impose a new type of foreign rule on India which would dwarf British rule. In 1946 Gandhi was genuinely afraid of this scenario which may seem odd if one looks at it with the benefit of hindsight. As a man guided by the ethics of conviction, Gandhi was expected to condemn the dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He would have certainly liked to do so, but it took him a year to call this an act of "the violence of the cowards". Why did he hesitate to do so in 1946?

Max Weber has coined the terms "ethics of conviction" and "ethics of responsibility" to highlight the problem of the politician, who has to keep in mind the context and the consequences of his public statements.³ In this instance Gandhi's conduct was that of a responsible politician who took into consideration what his public condemnation of President Truman's use of the atom bomb could have meant at this stage of the Indian freedom struggle. Under Roosevelt America was known to be in favour of India's freedom, although Churchill had successfully stymied Roosevelt's efforts. Now Churchill was no longer in power, but Truman's position was not yet known. He had dropped atom bombs on Japan and thus shown that he could resort to utmost violence, his deed ought to be condemned, but such a condemnation might prove to be an untimely provocation which would make Truman turn against India at a crucial moment. This is why Gandhi kept his lips sealed and even asked the American correspondent who had urged him to make a statement, to help him in remaining silent on this issue.

For Gandhi's concepts of individual conduct and social life this decision to refrain from making a public statement on an issue which perturbed him is of great importance. It shows that he was willing to suppress his judgement in the interest of his nation as perceived by him at that time. But there may have also been an

additional reason for keeping quiet about the atom bomb: Its existence deeply challenged his assumptions about the spiritual efficacy of individual conduct. A passing remark made in January 1946 showed what was troubling him in this respect. He was touring Orissa at that time and was met by an unruly mob at the Cuttack railway station. He scolded those people and asked them how they could pit indiscipline against the atom bomb which was the ultimate of brute force.⁴ The obvious question which would follow from that would be what kind of discipline would be required to cope with the challenge of the bomb. This must have been on his mind and he was unable to find an answer to it. On the one hand this ultimate manifestation of violence validated his emphasis on non-violence, but on the other hand it greatly increased the burden which weighed down the spiritual power which had to be put up against it. □

Notes & References

1. Bikhu Parekh, *Colonialism, Tradition and Reform: An Analysis of Gandhi's Political Discourse*, New Delhi, 1989.
2. See the chapter, "The Challenge of the Atom Bomb" in D. Rothermund, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Essay in Political Biography*, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 105–17.
3. Max Weber, "Politik als Beruf", Berlin, 1982 (7th ed.) (The German terms are "Gesinnungsethik" und "Verantwortungsethik".)
4. Rothermund, *op.cit.*, p. 110.

MESSENGER OF NON-VIOLENCE

Jean Comair

Gandhi was known in India and the world as the messenger of non-violence.

It is no use looking for a book written by him on this non-violence. All that you can find is a letter, an article, a speech, an interview or a commentary. It is you who have to collect, conclude and to have the view presented coherently.

Gandhi had not written a book on non-violence because he had not exhausted all the capacities, all the dimensions and all the means that he had. He first resorted to non-violence in South Africa. Thereupon the concept developed with the development of his struggle in facing the events and the people and it will continue to develop till the end of his life. It is for this that Gandhi had preferred to leave, after finishing the teaching—after the master is dead—to others to present what he had taught so that the presentation would be more fulfilling. Non-violence is like God, who can probe the depth of God and give the perfect description?

We shall try to define the concept on the basis of the teachings on the non-violence that Gandhi had left to us, the deeds he performed and the stances he called for.

The Truth

Truth is the remotest objective and the original starting point.

God is truth and searching for God is searching for truth. Gandhi's thought had developed so he said: Truth is God. Anyone searching for truth though heretic, he will be searching for God.

Everyman searching for truth will be searching for God. Everyman, nay, must strive and search so he may reach God and see Him "face to face".

Truth (*satya*) derives from (*sat*) that is existence. Truth is existence, all existence. It is constant and lasting, even if no one believed in it.

Man cannot fully and definitely attain truth, yet he may attain every corner of it and he may err in his attainment. Human beings' realities differ. They differ and they contradict. Tolerance becomes a need and compromises an acknowledgement of a reality and a wisdom. Let us not worry, for God manifests to people in various forms. Diverse realities are leaves of one tree. He who loses the way of truth will stumble and will fall, but will at the end be rightly guided.

Ethics are a human need. Ethics can only be based on truth. Truth is our greatest goal, nay, our only goal. Truth will have effect only if it is personified in a man, in his thoughts, his deeds and actions and if he believed in it, followed it and died for it.

To express his love for truth and the need for seeking it, Gandhi discovered the word Hinduism and the word "Satyagraha". *Satya* means truth, and *Graha* means commitment to this truth as faith in self, a weapon in struggle, joy in ordeals and an unconquered force.

Not by Violence

But how can you attain truth, know it and realize it in yourself? How to become a "satyagrahi" and how satyagraha becomes the way to victory?

The searcher for truth cannot attain this truth by violence, physical strength, armed dispute or by oppression and compulsion, even by other than physical means. The indications are many:

1. Like every Hindu, Gandhi believes in the unity of existence, that God manifests and is present in every living being. If you harm a living being you will be harming yourself and others. You will even harm the divine among the living beings.
2. Only the Creator is entitled to punish and destroy. When you are not the Creator, how can you punish and destroy.
3. Man cannot attain absolute truth. What may be truth to you

may be an error to me. Everyone has his own truth. By what right do you claim to have truth, and to force others to abandon their own truth in favour of yours.

4. Violence begets violence. The victorious is fierce and even fiercer. Violence leads to more violence and its continuation. Any good coming through violence will be ephemeral and not lasting.

But by Violence

Non-violence is an inaccurate translation of the Hindu word Ahimsa: Himsa means causing harm. Ahimsa means not causing harm. The word means, negatively, abstaining from violence, from causing harm, to any living being, from his destruction and his killing. It means, positively, to love every living being the way you love yourself.

Truth or God is the end. The means is non-violence or love; non-violence and love are in Gandhi's view and expression two synonyms.

Gandhi believed that the end and the means are interchangeable. Truth and non-violence and truth and love are two faces of the same coin. On one face you read truth and on the other you read non-violence. The value of the coin is one no matter which face you read. Gandhi says: "Non-violence and truth are my two lungs, without which I cannot survive."

What is Non-violence?

But what is non-violence, our way to God. What it means and what it doesn't mean?

1. Non-violence is not abstention from resisting violence, or evil out of indifference, but rather the most effective resistance. It is the best way to eradicate it. It is better than the eye for eye law: "Non-violence is not abstention from the real fight against evil. It is, as I understand it, a more vigorous fight against evil, more effective than the eye for eye law, which normally leads to the aggravation of evil. In my view we must resist intellectually and morally all that is not ethical. I must see that the sword in the tyrant's hand is made fully blunt rather than fighting it with one that is sharper and more solid. It is in disappointing him, in not letting him see my resistance to him as one physical, but spiritual, which renders him helpless.

Such resistance would first take him by surprise and later compel him to bow. Such bow does not humiliate the aggressor, but rather upgrades him. You may say that this attitude is ideal and it is indeed ideal.

2. Non-violence is not weakness or inability to resist by violence. It is not the weapon of the weak in the face of the mighty but rather the weapon of the mighty in the battle of the strong. One condition of this weapon is the ability to strike.
3. Non-violence is not fear in search for life or abstention from defending by the sword the property, honour and religion for fear that the opponent would kill us. A non-violent person does not fear death, for if he does he would not be non-violent. The non-violent man is just like those who go to death and die fearlessly and not like those who are scared of death.

Gandhi compares between non-violence and violence and cowardice. He prefers non-violence to violence. However, he prefers violence to cowardice and the running away from struggle. If non-violence did not help you resist evil, then go for violence and do not live as a coward. A violent person can become non-violent, but not the coward.

4. Non-violence is not only abstention from striking with the sword, but also the abstention of the mind from the desire for striking. A non-violent person abstains from causing harm to any living being, from subjecting him to sufferance and from destroying and killing him. He abstains from the desire for causing harm, suffering death, retaliation and hatred. Non-violence is a mental, deliberate and ethical attitude before it is an external physical one.

It is on the basis of this principle that Gandhi renounced passive resistance. He renounced it because of the hatred and the desire for violence which this resistance implied.

5. Non-violence is not total abstention from causing any harm or any killing in a world where the forces of violence are in conflict. Such abstention is not possible or necessary: We kill when we eat, drink and wander about. We kill a mad man whom we cannot stop from killing people. We kill in the defence of an innocent powerless person. Gandhi had stood in support of the British in their fight against the Boers, the Zulu and the Germans by forming ambulance corps. However, if we are to kill or to support we must not do so out of hatred, but only out of necessity and of preference should there be two conflicting duties.

We have spoken of what non-violence did not mean. Now let us speak of what it means.

1. Non-violence, or love, the law of the Universe, is as like the law of gravity. It is the law of every man. It is his duty which no other duty can compare with or replace. Violence is the law of the beasts while non-violence is the law of human species. We are destroyed if we violate it.
2. Non-violence is pain-enduring. It is abstention from all hatred, resentment, defense. It is patience on any violence, injustice, harm, insult, beating, imprisonment and the killing itself. A non-violent individual suffers but does not cause suffering. He cures a violent man of his violence by tolerating him and not by making him suffer.

Suffering is the law of man. Sensation of pain is stronger than the causing of pain.

3. Non-violence is the strongest force on earth. It is an unconquerable force.
4. Non-violence is in the capacity of every human being, whether man or a woman, a youth or an aged, healthy or sick, free or prisoner, a group or an individual.

Capacities, however, differ according to our ability for love and suffering and, subsequently to our ability for striving and for sacrifice.

Non-violence is the chalice of love which Gandhi offers to the world. The most stubborn must relent in the fire of love and if they do not, love is inadequate, a failure for which we and not love is responsible. A non-violent man must move on as though he walks on the edge of a sword, in equilibrium and any mistake would send him down. A non-violent man must not be lazy or derelict and must not think he has attained perfection. Non-violence is attained through untiring efforts and unceasing work.

- 5 Non-violence is man's only way to peace. Life is stronger than death. Survival is stronger than destruction. Truth is stronger than error. Love is stronger than hatred.

Let us not speed up final victory, as it may not be a final full victory. But, let us not be desperate and yield to the forces of violence and evil. Let us persevere in our efforts and struggle. Non-violence is widespread. It spreads more than even a contagious disease.

GANDHI AND HIS ORIGINAL ONTOLOGICAL CONTEMPLATION

R. Raj Singh

Gandhi is well known as crusader of non-violence. He is well respected as an exceptional political leader, humanist and idealist. However, his stature as a philosopher and his original contribution to the philosophy of Being remain less known. In his writings, an original understanding of Being is lucidly exposed and its implications for thought and practical living have been comprehensively traced. Anyone interested in fundamental ontology cannot ignore Gandhi's thought probes of and lived experiments with Being. The primary aim of this short essay is to expose the contribution of Gandhian thought to contemporary ontology. Since Gandhi has a tendency to trace the immediate implications of his ontological conclusions for the betterment of the human condition, a brief account of his standpoints on the desirable direction of personal and social reform will make us better acquainted with the wider applications of such philosophical insights.

An authentic thinker needs to have a single and fundamental object of thought. This object is both the inspiration and final aim of all his thoughtful pursuits. "To think is to confine yourself to a single thought"¹ says Heidegger who is convinced that "thought's courage stems from the bidding of Being."² According to Heidegger this single point of departure, this rootedness in Being is the innermost energy of the craft of philosophizing, which begins from a wonder about Being and turns into a preoccupation with and investigation of Being. In so far as philosophy does not

dismiss but envisions and employs the broadest possible perspectives on all that is and all that ought to be, it may be seen as having a universalistic approach and universal aim in its urge to generalize. To spell out the ontological grounds of philosophy and reiterate its universal approach has been a major theme of Heidegger's thought.

A philosophical study of Gandhi's writings shows us that his thoughtful understanding of Being as non-violence is a major contribution to contemporary ontology and as a thinker he not only confined himself to a single thought but also endeavoured to carry out the bidding of Being. Thus being preoccupied primarily with Being and in spelling out the basic tendencies of modernity and technological times Gandhi has a lot in common with Heidegger. Any comparison between Gandhi and Heidegger and their respective notions of Being may arouse immediate objections. Heidegger is a western philosopher, preoccupied primarily with a critique of the march of western metaphysics and has almost nothing to say about eastern philosophical traditions to which Gandhi belongs. Gandhi clearly is a people's philosopher whereas Heidegger may be called philosophers' philosopher. Heidegger, if the reports of his naive romance with Nazism are true, was a failure as a politician, whereas Gandhi successfully led a largely non-violent political struggle to win independence of India. Heidegger meditated on Being in the black forest, Gandhi did so in people's arena. Some will call Heidegger an armchair philosopher and Gandhi a man of action. Others will call Gandhi a social reformer and Heidegger a sophisticated academic philosopher. It will also be pointed out that Gandhi openly equates his notion of Being with God whereas Heidegger is avowedly a secular thinker.

In our exploration of Gandhi's contribution to Ontology and its comparison with that of Heidegger we must steer clear of these judgements, most of which open reflection will appear to be half-truths. Thinking and acting in the bidding of Being constituted the core of these thinkers' work. What Heidegger calls Being and temporal and existential implications of which he traces in his works, cannot be essentially different from what Gandhi calls *satya* and regards it as a coin the other side of which is *ahimsa* (non-violence). Both these thinkers bemoan the forgetfulness of Being that assails our age and point toward the pitfalls of a thoughtless faith in and applications of technology. Since Heidegger addresses primarily intellectuals and Gandhi mostly innocent masses, there is a difference in their terminologies and styles of

writing. However, a comparative study, desirable as it might be, of their respective philosophical standpoints is not the aim of this exposition. We wish primarily to explicate the role of Gandhian thought in offering a new meaning of Being and in tracing its existential implications.

Heidegger's remarkable contribution lies in his valuable reminders to contemporary western philosophy that thinking about Being must remain part and parcel of the activity called philosophizing. Even though Heidegger remains open to other possible meanings of Being,³ and calls his own efforts in ontology merely preparatory, provisional and incomplete,⁴ he confines himself to an exposition of the temporal meaning of Being in accordance with the traditional Greek understanding of Being as lodged in a temporal span. Gandhi, however, offers an entirely new basis for a fundamental understanding of Being to contemporary world ontology. This new point of departure for ontological contemplation is what he calls *ahimsa* (non-violence), "the other side" of *satya* (truth) i.e., *sat* (Being).⁵ Gandhi's originality in the field of ontology lies in proposing an alternative notion of Being to its age-old temporal philosophical understanding and thereby proposing a new challenge to "thinking about Being" with its infinite possibilities and prospects for "thought". Furthermore, although Gandhi borrows the concepts of *ahimsa* and *satya* from his own tradition of Indian Philosophy, acknowledging these "as old as the hills",⁶ what remains his original contribution is: (i) the uplifting of *ahimsa* in its traditional characterization as an ethical virtue to its new exposition as an ontological ground (ii) the application of *ahimsa* as a fundamental ideal to the practical problems of human existence as well as to the twentieth century social and political problems. Thus, Gandhi's ontological insight is not only an original contribution to the eastern tradition, but also an original gift to and thought-provoking enrichment of that philosophy of Being which is beyond eastern or western categories. *Satya* to Gandhi is what Being is to Heidegger. When Gandhi repeatedly affirms in his works "*ahimsa* is the law of our Being", "*ahimsa* is the other side of truth" and "Truth is God",⁷ he imparts in very simple words his insight that non-violence is the meaning of Being. *Ahimsa* has been advanced as an ethical virtue and a central thematic concept in Indian philosophies and religions from ancient times. Buddhism emphasized it as the practice of *karuna* (compassion). It is an important exhortation in the edicts of Emperor Asoka, a convert to Buddhism who voluntarily renounced war in

3rd century B.C. The Jains attempted to live a life of utmost *ahimsa* and value it as a supreme virtue. The epic *Mahabharatha* declared non-violence as the supreme *dharma* (*ahimsa paramo dharma*). Within his own philosophical tradition, Gandhi is by no means the author of the concept of *ahimsa*. Gandhi's contribution to human thought lies in his exposition of *ahimsa* as an ontological principle in which human being by nature participates in order to be essentially human. He explains that *ahimsa* is not a mere ethical value, and violence and non-violence are not two equally open alternatives of conduct. Violence is but a violation for it violates the core of Being; it is inhuman because human being basically and constantly thinks, creates and participates in Being. Human being's creative endeavours within its world are carried on in *ahimsa*, the *dharma* of our Being. Gandhi's other contribution lies in his exemplary living of *ahimsa* and his application of *ahimsa* to the twentieth century social and political conflict. Like Heidegger, he exposes the exploitative and earth destroying consequences of a blind application of technology. He does not wish or attempt reversing the clock of technicity, but only informs us that the possibilities of living the life of *ahimsa* are still open and still real.

Gandhi uses the term *satya* or truth for the ultimate reality, calls it his "pole star all along during life's journey",⁸ which is "one absolute truth which is total and all embracing...indescribable because it is God".⁹ Gandhi's choice of the name *satya* or truth for the Being of beings is based on several considerations: firstly, it is a concept well known even to the most innocent villager, i.e. it is not a term understood merely by scholars and intellectuals. Secondly, it is not a sectarian term confined merely to a particular religious or cultural tradition. Thus, Gandhi does not use the traditional Vedantin term *brahman* for Being. Truth is an idea to which even a non-believer in God can relate. That Gandhi means *sat* by *satya* is clearly stated by him:

The word *satya* comes from *sat*, which means 'to be' 'to exist'. Only God is ever the same through all time...I have been but striving to serve that truth.¹⁰

The word *satya* is derived from *sat*, which means that which is. *Satya* means a state of Being. Nothing is or exists in reality except truth. That is why, *sat* or *satya* is the right name for God. In fact it is more correct to say that truth is God than to say God is truth.¹¹

The equation of truth with God, is not only indicative of Gandhi's own *bhakti*, an affirmation of a devotional pursuit of

truth, the other side of which is non-violence, but also an attempt to desectarianize God.

However, it is Gandhi's equation of *satya* with *ahimsa* that is an original contribution to philosophy. For no other thinker has designated *ahimsa* as the very meaning of *sat*. Gandhi has opened up a new dimension, for a thinker's thinking about Being:

Ahimsa and Truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like two sides of a coin, or rather a smooth unstamped metallic disc.¹²

Are not non-violence and truth twins? The answer is emphatic 'NO'. Non-violence is embedded in truth and vice-versa.¹³

Gandhi's elevation of *ahimsa* to the level of Being makes it much more than mere "non-injury". It is given a positive meaning posed as a challenge to human thought. Thus, it is not easy for anyone to tell *ahimsa* apart from *himsa* simplistically.

Non-violence is not an easy thing to understand, still less to practise, weak as we are.¹⁴

I have never claimed to present the complete science of non-violence. It does not lend itself to such treatment.¹⁵

Although Gandhi clearly advocates impassioned thought on that silent but beckoning reality of *ahimsa*, and the application of caution, doubt and restraint in defining it as well as readiness to revise one's view of truth in the light of new facts, he goes beyond a mere armchair meditation on *ahimsa*. He endeavoured to apply his ontological insights to guide twentieth century men and women toward non-violent living and toward a predominantly non-violent society, often teaching by the example of his conduct and concrete projects.

According to Gandhi, to recognize violence and the causes of violence is the first task of citizens and policy-makers. Violence is not just bloodshed and killing, according to Gandhi, but all cases of injustice and inequality are cases of violence. Violence is the result of systemic inequities, prevalent in the world today.

The first condition of non-violence is justice all round in every department of life. Perhaps it is too much to expect of human nature. I do not, however, think so. No one should dogmatize about the capacity of human nature for degradation or exaltation.¹⁶

Gandhi recognizes that perfect non-violence is impossible. Our breathing, eating, moving about necessarily involves some violence. He admits that taking of life sometimes may be a duty. A

murderer running amuck must be stopped. Faced with utmost humiliation and dishonour one may have to resort to force. But to actively reduce the cycle of violence, as far as possible, is part and parcel of the creativity and self-advancement of the human entity.

"Means and ends are convertible terms in my philosophy of life"¹⁷ says Gandhi. *Ahimsa* is a superior and potent method as well as the goal of man's creative life. Wellbeing and moral growth of the individual are not possible without freedom and equal opportunity for all, which are truly realized and sustained only through non-violent means. Gandhi realized that governments cannot be entirely non-violent but he did have faith in the possibility of a predominantly non-violent society. Dismissing communism and capitalism both as violent systems, Gandhi envisioned a non-violent society in which there is a thorough decentralization of power, production and economic resources, and which is composed of small autonomous communities, willingly federated and co-existing. Decentralization is conducive to non-violence for centralization cannot be sustained and defended without the force of authority.

Social transformation from the present violent systems has to be achieved through persuasion and *Satyagraha* or "insistence upon truth". The Gandhian method of *Satyagraha* is a dual insistence: one must insist upon securing justice and one must insist upon oneself using only non-violent means. Another non-violent method proposed by Gandhi is that the rich are to be persuaded to become trustees of the less fortunate; it is to be impressed upon the rich that all superfluous wealth is stolen property which indeed belongs to the victims of economic exploitation in a violent world order. The rich must relinquish this extra wealth of their own accord, but should continue to serve as guardians. Benefit of all (*sarvodaya*) is not inconsistent with one's own benefit. The very same principles apply to the nation-states.

Gandhi's vision may appear too idealistic at first sight. It would be wrong, however, to dismiss him as a dreamer. Gandhi always endeavoured to be practical and put into practice what he preached. He often obtained a reasonable but concrete and visible success in his projects. His prediction that the violence of communism will never let it be a durable human way of life has come true. His declaration that small scale industrial and agricultural production will be most practical is coming true in the post-industrial revolution. However, his call for mingling ethics with economics, for economies of restraint based on voluntary restriction of wants

and for the cessation of economic exploitation by sister nations of sister nations is still not being heeded. Both the land of his birth and the world at large continue to bleed under physical and non-physical violence.

Gandhi's ideas were meant for the people of all lands. The independence of India from colonial rule was for him just the first step for India toward building a non-violent India. Needless to say that in not taking Gandhism seriously, the politicians of independent India have yet to take the second step. According to Gandhi, the social life of man proceeds in ascentric circles. Family is the first unit, a few families form the village, a few villages the district and the province, a few provinces the nation and all nations are members of the world-family. Thus "It is impossible for one to be internationalist without being a nationalist... It is not nationalism that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Each wants to profit at the expense of, and a rise on the ruin of the other."¹⁸ Gandhi believed that one's neighbours have the first claim to one's service and declared that to serve India is his way of serving humanity. If at least one experiment in non-violent struggle must be shown to succeed, people in the whole world would begin to have faith in *satyagraha*.

However, non-violent reform can never mean to alter the world into technological selfsameness. Diversity is the cornerstone of a non-violent society. Blind transfers of technology, widespread greed for money, anti-religious secularizations, religious and political conversions will not form a better world but a morally and intellectually poorer world. All cultures, religions and world-views should be allowed to exist and grow. East must not imitate the West was Gandhi's personal goal. It is better even for the Westerners that the world retains its diversity, so that questions are asked and answers are found based on many possible standpoints.

Gandhi's integrated world-view developed out of what he called his experiments with truth.¹⁹ "To think is to confine yourself to a single thought" says Heidegger. What he means is that a thinker must weave his thinking around a single fundamental object of thought which is an inspiration and goal at the same time. *Satya*, that is, *ahimsa* was Gandhi's single pursuit. It is the inspiration and goal of his thought. Reflecting on the meaning of Being as non-violence gave him numerous guidelines for personal progress and social transformation. Being as non-violence remains for him an inexhaustible object of thought which he, as a believer,

equated with God. In his emphasis on *ahimsa* as a fundamental attribute of Being, Gandhi has introduced a new dimension in the philosophy of Being. "To be is to be in non-violence" is an insight which will continue to intrigue philosophers and inspire social reformers for a long, long time. □

Notes & References

1. Martin Heidegger, "The Thinker as Poet" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York, Harper Colophone Books, 1975), p. 4.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
3. Cf., Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, trans. F.E. Wruck and J.G. Gray (New York, Harper and Row, 1968).
4. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York, Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 21–64.
5. M.K. Gandhi, 'Yeravada Mandir, 1935 from *All Men are Brothers*, ed. Krishna Kriplani (New York, Continuum, 1987), p. 74. Henceforth abbreviated as AMAB.
6. AMAB, p. 1. (*Harijan*, 28 March, 1936).
7. AMAB, p. 74 (*Yeravada Mandir*, 1935).
8. M.K. Gandhi, *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, ed. Raghavan Iyer (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 229. (*Young India*, 10 Dec., 1925). Henceforth abbreviated as EWMG.
9. EWMG, p. 224 (*Navajivan*, 20 Nov., 1921).
10. EWMG, p. 225 (*Navajivan*, 20 Nov., 1921).
11. EWMG, p. 231 (*Letter to Narandas Gandhi*, 22 July, 1932).
12. AMAB, p. 74 (*Yeravada Mandir*, 1935).
13. AMAB, p. 76 (*Harijan*, July, 1947).
14. AMAB, p. 89 (*Young India*, 7 Feb., 1929).
15. AMAB, p. 79 (*Harijan*, 22 Feb., 1942).
16. AMAB, p. 77 (*Mahatma*, V, April, 1940).
17. AMAB, p. 74 (*Young India*, 26 Dec., 1924).
18. AMAB, p. 108 (*Young India*, 18 June, 1925).
19. Cf. M.K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai (Ahmedabad, *Navajivan*, Vol. I, 1927, Vol. II, 1929).

GANDHI ON NATURAL LAW

Unto Tähtinen

The Meaning of 'Truth'

It is not always so easy to say what Gandhi precisely meant by 'Truth' with a capital T. He understood 'Truth' to be several different things on different occasions. At the very beginning, it is essential to rid ourselves of the idea that Gandhi thought of Truth as being the same as isolated facts. He distinguishes synthetic Truth from detailed knowledge. Gandhi did not appear to attribute any special significance to empirical knowledge in the overall search for Truth. Sense perceptions, he said, are often wrong and deluding, however real they may seem to us. External evidence is insufficient, one must have changed behaviour and character. (*Truth is God*, p. 6).

Sometimes Gandhi speaks of 'Truth' as truthfulness or the attempt to achieve Truth. In this case the term refers to a moral norm or virtue. One ought to strive after truth, one should struggle, endeavour, try hard, make efforts to attain truth. Oughtness, rather than is-ness, related to doing is the essence of a moral norm. The emphasis is on the endeavour, on the striving itself.

As a moral norm truthfulness resembles honesty. One may be expected to be honest or truthful towards other human beings. In this case it is a social moral norm of verbal communication, it may also be applied to action. Yet one may be honest towards oneself, too. Being truthful to oneself is, again, a self-regarding moral norm. Honesty to oneself is, I think, for Gandhi more essential and primary than social honesty. One ought to be straightforward

in one's own essence, thereafter and consequently towards others and the society at large.

Generally—in non-Gandhian writings—'truth' is understood as an epistemological concept. However, for Gandhi, correspondence with facts, and also coherence with other beliefs has mainly an instrumental value. He even seems to have disregarded logical consistency and replaced it with consistency of thought (in general) and life, theory and action. (*My Religion*, p. 122).

If any conventional Western theory of truth can be applied to Gandhi's thinking, it is the pragmatic theory. A belief or hypothesis is true if it works satisfactorily or is successful when applied to action. Yet Gandhi differs from the Western pragmatists in his view of what is determined to be successful or satisfactory. Therefore, values are essential. Thus, what is true is shown by value-consequences reaped by the application of the hypothesis.

So Truth, as Gandhi thought of it, seems to be derived in this epistemological sense, too, a largely normative character. In one sense of the word 'Truth' is a moral norm, in another sense it implies a value-consequence. Gandhi often said that Truth is the end—not just an end or any end, any desired object, but the end. 'Truth' finally implies metaphysics, value-metaphysics.

Gandhi's Life-'Experiments' Revealing Truth

Truth as truthfulness also points to a certain content: that which should be discussed or the aim which ought to be achieved. Now, it is this sense of Truth as an end that I wish to expand on, and I may elaborate somewhat on Gandhi's life.

Gandhian philosophy took shape in a different way than academic philosophy in general. Usually a scholar studies the writings of other scholars, ponders over the problems and often teaches at some university. Yet Gandhi's view of life did not come into existence in such a conventional way.

Gandhian philosophy was born out of an abstraction of his own and his co-workers' lives and actions. The philosophy is the nucleus of his life-story and may be recognizable afterwards. Gandhi applied certain ideas or ideals to action so far as they appealed to his conscience. Through application the ideas developed and were gradually transformed.

Three 'experiments of life', I think, were especially substantial for Gandhi. They were all essentially concerned with his own life and the people around him. The first was racial discrimination

in South Africa. He had moved there in 1893 as a young lawyer. He was continuously degraded and molested, as was the whole Indian community.

These bitter experiences gave rise to an idea that the positive law can be at least, in part, morally unjustified, that the law in many obvious cases is not morally binding.

Another basic experience was the colonial status of India. Britain controlled Indian foreign trade, bought raw materials from India and sold her back industrial goods. This ruined the handicraft industry and made India poor. Gandhi clearly understood that colonial exploitation was morally wrong, as was the legal system backing it.

The third basic experience of legal injustice involved Hindu law. The lot of the outcasts was miserable. Gandhi felt that it was his moral duty to help the Harijans to live a humanly acceptable type of life. Gandhi found that a social system can also be unjustified from a moral point of view. The Hindu law based on ancient authority and on highly regarded religious institutions was in this respect faulty.

Thus Gandhi came to realize that certain positive laws, even the whole system of law, as well as traditional social and religious institutions can be in conflict with an ethical law. The ethical law, however, is higher in authority and in the case of a conflict, takes precedence.

Starting with his own personal life-experience, his individual hardships, then gradually widening to the Indian community in South Africa, thereafter to India, Gandhi came to realize that there is a higher normative law above positive law. For a person originally a lawyer, this proved to be a drastic mental development. He grew to be a greater man for thus moving onward in pursuit of a higher law.

Ancient Indian and Modern Western Sources

Gandhi must have come across the Western theories of Natural Law while studying law in London. Anyway, the ancient Indian traditions also contain ideas resembling the Western ones. In the Vedas *Rita* is mentioned. It means first and foremost a cosmic rule: according stars move according to their orbit and cows eat grass according to their inborn nature. *Rita* means the wholeness of the laws of nature and the harmony implied in the wholeness of existence. But it also represents a formal standard for

human beings, an ethical law which men should observe in their actions. Thus *Rita* is also a metaphysical-ethical law, above all social institutions. It is unseen and a non-positive moral law of higher authority than the human law.

In this respect, as in many others, Gandhi was influenced by ancient Indian ideals, especially normative ideals, which he had imbibed in childhood. He became conscious of these latent ideals through their Western equivalents. The experience of injustice offered a moral provocation and catapulted those dormant ideals into his full consciousness.

Truth as Natural Law

The most primary normative ideal for Gandhi was Truth. It was inderivable and was not a means to anything else. In the final analysis it is the eternal principle, the absolute Truth, God (*Collected Works*, XXXIX, p. 4). This Truth has an intrinsic value.

To seek Truth is the *summum bonum* of life (CW, XXXIX, p. 203). This seems to mean that seeking the final Truth has the highest moral value.

In the above senses Truth is a formal concept which cannot be analytically defined. However, it may also attain material content and its meaning then becomes manifold. For instance, the independence of India and the removal of castelessness are parts of Truth (Bose: *Selections*, p. 43; CW, LIII, p. 427).

To use Western terminology, many meanings of Truth, and central meanings, are absorbed into the concept of Natural Law. Gandhi himself did not want to use the term 'Natural Law' nor (ethical) 'Justice', he rather preferred to speak of 'Truth'. He insisted on his specific vocabulary, although other vocabularies would also have been possible.

In the West Natural Law means a higher and more authoritative principle as opposed to the positive law of state. Natural Law has been supposed to be universally valid irrespective of time and place. It consists of principles of practical reasoning in ordering human life and community according to certain ethical ideals. It has arisen in opposition to positive law yet in origin and nature distinct from it. References to Natural Law have been used as the guiding light in changing positive laws.

Natural Law has in the West been sometimes considered as an eternal law derived from the existence of God or being ultimately subjected to a divine law.

Gandhi also equates Truth with God. In this sense Truth is purely formal by nature. In a letter Gandhi explains that as a perfect definition of God is impossible, so, too, is one of Truth. The truth, he adds, which can be defined, ceases to be his God. (CW, LXV, p. 398). The final truth can never be reached, it can only be approached in approximation (*Selections*, p. 45).

Gandhi shuns the thought of describing the final end in detail. He rather says that "one step is enough for me". Anyway, he believes that it is possible to approach, even to attain, the absolute Truth if we faithfully and steadily practise a relative truth as we ever know it (CW, LIV, p. 372).

Thus Natural Law or Truth has according to Gandhi two meanings. The most primary meaning is purely formal. The other is a material meaning having a relative validity.

How to Know the Truth?

There are two main problems involved in the realization of Natural Law. One is the question of how we ever know it, whether can we have objective knowledge about it. Another question is, how we are capable of realizing it in practice.

The most central problem is that of knowledge. Is our assumed knowledge about Natural Law subjective or relative or is it possible to have objective knowledge and on what conditions?

Gandhi asked, "What is Truth?" and answered that it is what the inner voice tells us. He further asked how it was possible that different people consider different and mutually conflicting things as truth. He tells us that the human mind is not at the same level of development. What seems to be truth for one may seem an untruth to another. Therefore an experimental knowledge of truth has certain preconditions. Ardent moral practice is preparatory to this knowledge. Truthfulness, non-violence, limitation of wants, self-control, non-possession and humbleness are virtues which train the mind (*Selections*, pp. 5-6).

Thus Gandhi basically understood Truth in a formal way, as that which the inner voice tells us or as an end to which all human endeavour is a means. Truth is consequently something of a border-value. The goal, he says, always recedes from our way (*Selections*, p. 19).

According to Gandhi we have a right to err and so long as we do not see our mistakes, we must act in accord with the ethical norm which we understand to be true (CW, XXXVIII, p. 21). Thus

Gandhi accepts a putative truth justifying action. Truth as we grasp it has relative validity, even then we have an ethical obligation to act according to it and subject it to a pragmatic test. Conditions of the justification of action are a phenomenological analysis of one's own mind and moral purity of motivation.

Gandhi says that by having undergone a deep internal search, he has analysed every psychological situation (CW, XXXIX, p. 4). Praying and fasting can make mental effort more intense and represent ascetic self-purification (CW, LII, p. 376).

Gandhi's method of seeking truth could be described as ascetic-phenomenological. The emphasis on moral purification shows the influence of the ascetic Indian schools of thought, Upaniṣads, Yoga, Jain and Buddhist.

Yet Gandhi did not respect ancient traditions as such. He respected them only so far as they responded to his own moral consciousness. He resorted to intuition, which in the final instance is always something personal. He believed a phenomenological analysis of one's own consciousness to be the criterion for truth and justice.

In this respect Gandhi could depart from ancient authority, even the authority of the Holy Writings, such as the Vedas.

Actually, anyone who clings to Natural Law as a primary principle is to be considered a radical. Natural Law is by definition, as concept, already separate from the existing society and its legal, political, social, economic and religious institutions. One who resorts to Natural Law as the final authority will always demand improvements and changes in society. Many of the changes may be possible within the legal and political framework, others may not.

Natural Duties versus Natural Rights

Thus Gandhi essentially meant Natural Law by Truth, but was reluctant to use the vocabulary of Natural Law. Sometimes he, however, mentioned a natural right (*Selections*, p. 255). Obviously he preferred to speak of 'Truth' instead of justice or law even in the ethical sense of the term. He was also reluctant to speak of rights.

Possibly Gandhi felt that the vocabulary of Natural Law or natural rights could, in the mind of some listener or reader, be wrongly identified with legal rights or privileges, which aim at expressing personal benefit. Gandhi definitely wanted to avoid this interpretation.

The term 'rights' did not much appeal to him either. He saw the performance of duty as the source of rights (*Selections*, p. 284). Without duties there are no real rights. If everybody demanded rights and nobody performed the duties, it would lead to complete chaos. If, on the other hand, instead of holding on to his rights everyone performed his duty, it would immediately lead to order in human society (Dutta, p. 88).

The relationship between duties and rights can be described by saying that if duties are correctly performed, they are sure to bring good results (*The India of My Dreams*, p. 101). Duties are thus the source of rights. Apparent rights, not based on one's performed duty, are a seizure of power. The seizure of power or privilege is not morally justified (*Hindu Dharma*, p. 223). Seizure of power is, besides being unjustified, also evil, because it leads to violence when secured. It increases social, political and economic structural violence. Violence becomes necessary when one tries to insure his own rights without performing his duties (*Non-violence*, II, pp. 269-70).

Thus Gandhi did not sign the Proclamation of Rights. Instead, his moral philosophy stands for a proclamation of human duties. In this respect he follows rather the ancient Indian way of moral thinking, where the whole stress is on *dharma* and not on natural rights as in the West.

Natural Law and Non-violence

Gandhi considered non-violence the means of realizing Natural Law. Real justice cannot be secured by evil means, the means must be morally pure. Here also, I think, lies a difference between the Natural law theorists of the West and Gandhi. The Western thinkers did not realize the importance of the ethically correct means of realizing the end.

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MAHATMA GANDHI'S SATYĀGRAHA

Karuna Kusalasaya

As far as I can remember, the word “Satyāgraha” first came into use and practice in South Africa where Mahatma Gandhi launched a crusade against Apartheid. “Satyāgraha” is a combination of two Sanskrit words, namely, “Satya” meaning “truth” and “Āgraha” which means “hold on”, “determination” or “strong attachment”. The two words in combination, therefore, mean “hold on or attachment to truth”. In our Royal Institute Thai-to-Thai language Dictionary the word “Satyāgraha” is defined as follows:

“application of truth in pursuit of social justice employing civil disobedience or passive resistance against unjust laws or orders but without the use of force.”

The word “Satyāgraha” was first used in the Thai language more than five decades ago, and the credit for doing so, as far as I can remember, goes to an Indian Sanyāsi, by name Swāmi Satyānanda Puri of the Rāmkrishna Order, Calcutta. Many among us whose age is over half a century, must have heard the name

(Abstract of a speech in Thai language delivered on the occasion of the 125th Birthday Anniversary Celebration of Mahatma Gandhi at the Research and Development Institute (RDI), Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Northeast Thailand on October 2, 1994)

of this once famous scholar and intellectual from India.

At this stage I would like to say a few words on the not-too-often-heard-of story of this uncommon Hindu monk.

Swāmi Satyānanda Puri, Vedāntapradīp, M.A., came to Thailand as long ago as in 1931, at the recommendation of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore and Dr. Kālidās Nāg, the famous savant of Bengal. Both Gurudeva and Dr. Nāg visited Thailand (then known as Siam) in 1927 as official guests of the Royal Thai Government. Having learnt at first hand from Tagore about the close cultural ties between India and Thailand, and, above all, at the suggestion of the Poet himself, the Swāmi set out for Thailand, strongly determined to work for the strengthening of the cultural links between the two countries. And, within a couple of years after his arrival in Bangkok, Swāmi Satyānanda Puri, with his erudition in Oriental Learning, succeeded in winning admiration and respect from contemporary Thai scholars and men-of-letters. The Swāmi started publishing a periodical "Voice of the East" and founded the Thai-Bharat Cultural Lodge which remains active till today. Among the several books in Thai authored by the Swami, one was "Mahatma Gandhi who Revolutionized India". In this, perhaps, the very first book on Gandhi in the Thai language, the word "Satyāgraha" was introduced to the Thai reading public which I have just mentioned.

Swāmi Satyānanda Puri, himself a staunch nationalist, died in an aeroplane crash on his way to Japan in the beginning of the Greater East Asia War.

Now let me return to my subject "Mahatma Gandhi's Satyāgraha".

You all of course have heard of the word "Ahimsā", so often used by the Mahatma in his campaign for India's freedom.

"Ahimsā", another word from Sanskrit, stands for non-violence. This word, in Gandhi's usage, usually appeared side by side with the word Satya, e.g., "Satya and Ahimsā".

Ahimsā, as employed in Satyāgraha and according to the Mahatma's definition, did not simply mean non-violence in the physical plane. More than that, it did embrace non-violence in the mental sphere as well. Such teaching, indeed, is very hard to put into practice. For an ordinary being like myself, I humbly admit that the lesson, though very noble, is really hard to follow.

Those who had witnessed the world famous award-winning movie *Gandhi* shown across the world about a decade ago, will recollect that the long line of Satyāgrahis under leadership of

Mahatma Gandhi, while moving towards the seashore defying the British Government salt making law, behaved in a very orderly and non-violent way, despite provocative and threatening manner on the part of police forces stationed at the scene. Such was the impact of Gandhi's influence and direction. "A true Satyāgrahi must be able to stand trials and tribulations in order to fulfil his mission", often emphasized the Mahatma.

Another important issue. I am often asked by my Thai compatriots if "Satyāgraha" as taught by Gandhi and tested in India, could be employed successfully elsewhere? I say in reply that personally I am doubtful because of various factors such as situations, circumstances, motives, etc.

Lastly I would like to say a few words about "Satyāgraha in Action" that I witnessed in India during my student days.

As already said, I was a student in India (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal) during the crucial days in India's struggle for freedom. What impressed me most and often moved me to tears then was the way the Indian people, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, irrespective of castes and creeds, sacrificed their all for the freedom of their beloved motherland. I saw with my own eyes, long lines of ordinary Indian women, draped in their customary saris, shy-looking, yet defiant and spirited. They took to the streets, raising patriotic slogans "Bhārat Mātā Kee Jai" and "Vande Mātaram". Even today, after a lapse of almost half a century, the scene is vivid in my memory.

Finally I would like to remind you of the Seven Deadly Sins which Mahatma Gandhi always warned us to be wary of and which, in my opinion, are particularly relevant in the world of today. These are:

1. Politics without principles.
2. Pleasure without conscience.
3. Wealth without work.
4. Knowledge without character.
5. Commerce without morality.
6. Science without humanity.
7. Worship without sacrifice.

I thank you all for bearing with my speech.



GANDHI IN THE NOVELS OF MULK RAJ ANAND AND RAJA RAO

Michel Pousse

The thirties are among the richest in Indo-Anglian literature. After almost a century of servility to Great Britain, here at last was a school of writers attaining to stylistic independence before the country became politically independent. Indian writers in English who had since long been considered as faithful defenders of the British crown set out to tread a path which made them eulogize Indian nationalism. True, the evolution had begun with philosophers such as Tagore and Aurobindo, but their style had still remained too Victorian. The ideas were no longer those of the great masters of the past (De Rozio or Dutt), but the English they used to express themselves was still king's English and the English of the Oxbridge intellectuals.

The great turning point of the thirties hence consisted for the writers of the new generation in putting into practice the ideals of Gandhi. All that was Indian, all that was linked to the cultural and religious heritage of the country had to be highlighted. There was to be no reluctance in making use of English—Gandhi himself often took recourse to it in his speeches and articles—but this English had to be Indianised. It had to be a faithful reflection of the Indian reality and not seek any longer to imitate as perfectly as possible the language of the masters who were no longer being

acknowledged as such. If three hundred years of a common history had made English into a component of Indian culture, this component had to sever itself from the umbilical cord.

Anand and Rao were not the first Indo-Anglian authors to focus on their country and to use English to describe its wealth. The two novels by Venkataramani, *Murugan the Tiller* and *Kandan the Patriot*, were bedside reading for a whole generation of patriots. However, these novels were too politicised, even tendentious, to stand the test of time. Their worth lies today only in the testimony they provide of the period because Venkataramani was more a patriot than a writer.

Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao are first and foremost artists, each having an ideal which is more literary than political. *Untouchable* and *Kanthapura*, their first novels respectively, made a breakthrough in Indo-Anglian literature. Anand launched into fields that were taboo in the literatures of the sub-continent: the poor, and the exploitation of man by man. Rao denounced the hypocrisy of the Brahmins. Both brought a strong local colour into the English they utilised. A new literary school was born.

The political events the country was passing through were at the core of their novels, and Gandhi, the charismatic leader, was to become the source of their inspiration. In their writings, the presence of the Mahatma is mythological, physical, philosophical and artistic.

Gandhi was a personality with myriad facets, being all at once a philosopher, a religious man, a politician and a man of action. Whichever one of these be the image that is highlighted, the Mahatma remained, above all, a man who was concerned with the fate of the people and who gave it new hope.

However different Anand and Rao are from each other, the former a socialist with Marxist tendencies for whom religion is the opium of the masses and the caste system nothing but an Indian variation of the universal exploitation of man by man, the latter being a person seeking to give to life a spiritual meaning and wanting to find in religion the original grandeur of Indian civilisation, both, in their two novels, have drawn an almost identical picture of Gandhi.

In *Untouchable*, Gandhi is primarily a myth. He belongs to the tradition of the great saints of the past:

To him Gandhi was a legend, a tradition, an oracle. He had heard from time to time during the last fourteen years, how a saint had arisen as great as Guru Nanak, the incarnation of Krishnaji Maharaj

of whom the Ferungi Sarkar was very afraid... it was said that he slept in a temple one night with his feet towards the shrine of the God. When the Brahmins had chastised him, for deliberately turning his feet towards God, he told them that God was everywhere and asked them to turn his feet in the direction where God was not. Upon this the priests turned his feet in the direction opposite to the one where the image of God was, and to the shrine of God moved in the direction of his feet. (U. 155)

The people turned Gandhi into a mythological hero:

People said he was a saint, that he was an avatar of Gods Vishnu and Krishna. Only recently he had heard that a spider had woven a web in the house of the Lat Sahib at Dilli, making a portrait of the sage, and writing his name under it in English. (U. 154)

Gandhi attracted like a magnet (an image later recaptured by Narayan) and no one could resist his attraction:

The word 'Mahatma' was like a magical magnet, to which he, like all the other people about him rushed blindly. (U. 151)

Rao also turned Gandhi into a hero emerging out of mythology, an avatar of Krishna:

There was born in a family in Gujarat a son such as the world has never beheld. As soon as he came forth, the four wide walls began to shine like the Kingdom of the Sun, and hardly was he in the cradle when he began to lisp the language of wisdom. You remember how Krishna, when he was but a babe of four, had begun to fight against demons and had killed the serpent Kali... and so he (Gandhi) goes from village to village to slay the serpent of foreign rule. (K. 22)

Through the words of the Mahatma, the listener heard once again the wisdom of the scriptures:

There is something in it of the silent communion of the ancient books. (K. 52).

There are too many examples to permit of an exhaustive list. It is however striking that such lines were being written by young authors (both were less than thirty years old). Gandhi had been turned into a myth not only during his own life-time but even before he had achieved the objectives that he had set for himself. This was due to the fact that adhering to his ideals had become an act of faith. He himself set his own physical frailty, which made him seem like a child, against his moral conviction which

overturned the natural order. In the two novels, it is the representatives of the anti-Gandhian order who lose their might:

...in the midst of this enormous crowd of Indians, fired with enthusiasm for their leader, the foreigner seemed out of place, insignificant, the representative of an order which seemed to have nothing to do with the native. (U. 160)

What is a policeman before a Gandhi's man? Tell me, does a boar stand before a lion or a jackal before an elephant? (K. 84).

Gandhi was not only a myth. He was a great reformer for whom the English were not the main enemy. Their departure was not an end in itself, it was part of the framework of a more general, candidly humanist philosophy which aimed at restoring to man his full dignity. His fight against untouchability was at the very core of his action:

As you all know, while we are asking for freedom from the grip of a foreign nation, we have ourselves, for centuries, trampled underfoot millions of human beings without feeling the slightest remorse for our iniquity (U. 162)...

'I regard untouchability', the Mahatma was saying, 'as the greatest blot on Hinduism...' (U. 163)

Rao laid stress on the notions of truth, equality of the sexes and of sacrifice, but we know that the hero of his novel, the Brahman Moorthy penetrates into the area where the untouchables live and accepts food from them, which results in his being excommunicated by the entire village. Truth is an absolute. Moorthy, who has to be judged, refuses to engage a lawyer as honesty needs no defender and the assertion of truth is enough:

Sister, you need not be a man to fight. (K. 149) Between truth and me, none shall come. (K. 125) We seek to be soldier saints. (K. 181)

These quotations from *Kanthapura* are a perfect illustration of the variety of the ideals upheld by Gandhi.

Never however is the reader under the impression that Anand or Rao have been subjugated by the personality of the Mahatma to the extent of losing all critical sense. *Untouchable* was written in London, then completely revised by Anand after his stay at the Sabarmati Ashram where he read the first version of the novel to Gandhi. Anand was already a socialist at the time and it was the social reformer he admired most in Gandhi. He went on therefore to show that the importance of religion was too great in Gandhi's philosophy and led him to adopt exaggerated postures:

Two of the strongest desires that keep me in the flesh are the emancipation of the Untouchables and the protection of the cow. When these two desires are fulfilled there is swaraj, and therein lies my soul's deliverance. (U. 166)

In both novels, Gandhi's philosophy is subject to criticism. Following the speech made by the Mahatma in *Untouchable*, Gandhi is reproached for not encouraging the use of machines for relieving the hardships of workers, particularly the Untouchables. Rao brings out clearly the social unrest engendered by holding on to a philosophy which goes against numerous social taboos. Moorthy is repudiated by his mother who is the symbol of conservatism in India, and who dies of grief, because he has rubbed shoulders with the Untouchables:

He sat and ate his food by the kitchen threshold and she in the kitchen, and everybody saw that Narsamma was growing thin as a bamboo and shrivelled like the banana bark. (K. 65)

After all, my son, it is the Kalyuga-floods, and as the sastras, say, there will be the confusion of castes and the pollution of progeny. (K. 43)

The role played by Gandhi differs however in the two novels. Anand highlights mainly the social injustices of which Bakha is a victim. Gandhi only puts in an appearance at the end of the novel and no concrete action takes place. At the end of the day, Bakha remains the same and will have to face the same humiliation on the morrow at the hands of the Brahmans. Gandhi is no more than a ray of light in the dark misery of his daily life. Rao, through the personality of Moorthy, puts into practice on the level of the village, the philosophy of Gandhi and shows how difficult it is and how much self-abnegation is required to be able to convince people. Moorthy, as against Bakha, is identified with Gandhi who is never physically present in the novel where he remains an external point of reference. Just as the Mahatma was portrayed in the popular imagination as a thaumaturgist, Moorthy becomes capable, in the eyes of the Pariahs, of performing miracles:

Touch it, Moorthappa, touch it only as if it were offered to the gods, and we shall be sanctified. (K. 105)

Rao laid as much stress on the organisation of the Congress as he did on the religious and philosophic aspects of Gandhi. We know that in the thirties Gandhi had proceeded to carry out a reorganisation of the Congress, transforming an annual meeting into a permanent body, centralised on the level of its executive

and delocalised on the level of cities and villages through local sections. Moorthy hence plays in the village of Kanthapura the same role as the Mahatma on the level of the nation: he organises a section of the Congress, and by himself setting the example, he preaches religious tolerance and political commitment by all against the outside power. While Anand shows the English as economic exploiters, an extension of the Indian system of exploitation, Rao depicts them as destroyers of moral values. Moorthy wants to demolish the *Toddy Shops* which have turned the Coolies into a degenerate race of alcoholics. Anand and Rao lay stress each one on that aspect which matches with his own political and religious convictions.

Anand has shown the limits of the credibility of the Mahatma by bringing up the importance that he gave to the fight in defence of the cow (which, in addition, separated the Muslims from the Hindus). Rao made Moorthy play the role of a person converted to the views of Nehru. After his release from prison, after having therefore undergone an ordeal that by definition was Gandhian (imprisonment being, in the eyes of Gandhi, an element in strengthening the conviction of the disciple) Moorthy, influenced by sages, became a supporter of Nehru in whom he saw the next political chief. He has no way rejected Gandhi; he found his extension in Nehru:

Jawaharlal will change it. You know Jawaharlal is like a Bharata to the Mahatma....he calls himself an 'equal-distributionist', and I am with him and his men. (K. 256, 257)

Earlier Rao had been one with Anand in adding to the image of Gandhi the one missing element: that of Gandhi understood as a child, as someone whose idealism bordered on naivety and who could therefore be manipulated:

Since I am out of prison I met this satyagrahi and that, and we discussed many a problem, and they all say the Mahatma is a noble person, a saint, but the English will know how to cheat him, and he will let himself be cheated (K. 256)

We should probably read in these lines an allusion to the Irwin-Gandhi pact whose signature was criticised by Nehru and which brought disappointment to many Indians. In *Untouchable*, the image of the childish fragility of Gandhi is also present:

The sage seemed to him like a child, as he sat huddled up between two women, an Indian and an English woman. (U. 159)

What strikes the reader of these two novels which left an impression on their times was the maturity shown by these two young writers. They had understood the complexity and the richness of the personality of Gandhi and had been able to resist the temptation of hagiography to describe a man of flesh and blood, an idealist whose very limitations made him all the more a human being.

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SPANISH WRITINGS ON GANDHI

Enrique Gallud Jardiel

In 1930 a famous Spanish journalist, Adelardo Fernandez Arias, better known by his pseudonym "The ever-restless fellow", beautifully summed up the Mahatma's personality:

Gandhi is a mystic like Buddha, profound as Confucius, leader as Moses, psychologist like Mohammad, philosopher like Zoroastro, practitioner of self-denial as Jesus and revolutionary like Luther.

(*Through the Country that Gandhi Awakened*, Barcelona, 1930, p. 120)

Unfortunately, whatever was written up to the decade of the nineteen sixties on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in the Iberian Peninsula, was fragmentary in nature and based, generally, on second-hand material taken from French and English sources. These sporadic writings had little literary quality and fell far short of the expectations of a good biography. Of course an emphasis was put on non-violence as a political creed with the translations of foreign authors (Romain Rolland, Lanza del Vasto) highlighting on such themes as the Civil Disobedience Movement and the personality of Vinoba Bhave. Travel literature could not add much to whatever was available, because during the period of the Mahatma's political activity and the movement for India's independence, the Spaniards did not visit India frequently.

Among the books written in Spain on Gandhi during his life-time, one could mention only as an original contribution the work of Juan Guixé entitled *Mahatma Gandhi* (1930), although it

is an extended pamphlet rather than a book and deficient in terminologies and even in proper names ("Gokade" is mentioned in place of Gokhale and the transliteration of the term "hindusthani" appears as "indo-satani"). The work is written in a precious style which is marked by a literary flair. Its most common characteristic is the presentation of Gandhi as a Messianic figure. The doctrine of ahimsa is examined with reference to primitive Christianity and the author establishes a direct comparison between Gandhi and Jesus Christ, raising the former to the level of a prophet. However, a positive element of the booklet is that it includes an abundance of extracts which have been very well selected from the writings of Gandhi found in *Young India*, which would otherwise never have come to light for the Hispanic reading public and which helped in understanding directly his political intentions, apart from the intentions of the author.

A short biography entitled Gandhi by a Spanish author, F. Torres, appeared in 1959. This did not show any real commitment and was not well documented. Gandhi's work in his own country was almost totally ignored and the booklet concerns itself largely with the racial discrimination that he had to suffer in South Africa. The emphasis was on exotic and picturesque elements and on eccentricities that were to be found in relation to his life.

During the seventies almost nothing was written in Spain on this subject, apart from a short narrative by Ana Fraga which bore the title *The Political Thought of Gandhi* (1967), of insignificant quality and very limited circulation. On the contrary, there appeared translations of important biographies of foreign authors, such as Jean Lacroix, Edmond Privat and Otto Wolf among others, the major part of which was centred in the political aspects of the subject, as for example, *The Final Hours of Gandhi* by Stanley Wolpert, and *Three Assassinations* by H.S. Hegner coinciding with the interest aroused in the theme of the film entitled *Nine Hours to Rama* of the American director Mark Robson, released in 1963 which was concerned with the analysis of the psychology and the political intentions of Nathuram Godse, on the eve of the crime. The glorification of Gandhi as a martyr for a just cause led to idealization, as can be seen in the following description by Juan B. Bergua, well-known Spanish expert in mythology, in the year 1963:

That man admirable in many ways and a thousand times admirable as the champion of non-violence. That man of habits, of life, of

perfect austerity, champion in returning to the times of the Vedas. (Introduction to *"The Ramayana"*, Madrid, 1963, p. 47).

Ramiro Antonio called Capilla wrote in 1970, *Three Great Hindu Mystics*. His intention was to deal with Indian spirituality and for this purpose he chose three figures: Rāmana Maharshi, whom the author calls "the mystic of spirituality", Gandhi, "the mystic of politics" and Rabindranath Tagore, "the mystic of literature". The space allocated to the last two figures was a little arbitrary; there was excessive idealization of politics and spiritualization of literature.

Seventy pages dedicated to Gandhi, drawn obviously from Indian sources (*Gandhi* by B.R. Nanda, 1960 and *Gandhi, Revolution without Violence* by Shahani, 1962), are concerned with an extremely positive description of the individual. Political details are ignored, the situation of the country under the British dominion is not touched upon, even Nehru, Patel and other personalities of the time are not mentioned. The book is about the cultural evolution of Gandhi and about the influence of the European intellectuals and especially that of Tolstoy on him. The contacts of the Mahatma with Annie Besant and the Theosophist Blavatski are mentioned, as well as that of his stand on Theosophy. Emphasis is laid on his reading of the *Bible* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. The chapters dedicated to the description of his death and the circumstances that surrounded him are given a very poetical treatment, which is a kind of stylistic climax in an entirely metaphorical language. To sum up: a book very pleasant to read, but rather patchy and evidently incomplete.

The first Spanish book on this theme in a non-Spanish language appeared in 1971 and was entitled *Ahimsa, the Non-violence of Gandhi* in Catalan language, by Aurora Diaz-Plaja, following on the trail of some articles which had been published earlier ("Gandhi, Apostle of Peace" by the above-mentioned author, in the journal called *Patufet*, no. 26 and "The Confessions of our Gandhi" by M. Basso in *Cavall Fort*, no. 63). This book is addressed to the youth in which it is exhorted to follow the example of Gandhi in "his struggle against the established order". An attempt has been made to present Gandhi as a leader who can be followed for any pacific movement, including the "hippy" phenomenon, which is specially mentioned. The work is divided in two parts: an account of Gandhi's activities and a commentary on his ideas on specific themes.

The first part is quite incomplete regarding basic information

for the uninitiated. The political activities of Gandhi in India are briefly narrated in only two pages. The emphasis is on his attitude to the problems of caste and untouchability rather than on his efforts to achieve independence of the Indian people. There are many quotations from Gandhi's autobiography, *My Experiments with Truth* and the author indicates the points of contact between the Mahatma and Martin Luther King.

The second part of the book describes Gandhi's views on various subjects: war, colonialism, religion, women, etc., and makes a very interesting reading. The European authors who had influenced Gandhi are mentioned (Tolstoy, Max Muller, Ruskin, Nietzsche), as well as Gandhi's own preferred readings. His vows are listed and explained, also vows that he presented for the members of the Sabarmati Ashram: truth, non-violence, *brahmacharya*, eating judiciously, honesty and austerity. Gandhi's politics of non-cooperation with the British government are explained. His religious Syncretism and his preoccupation with the problems that fanaticism created among his people are also described. However, the chapters of the book are not adequately integrated, nor do they follow a logical order, though each chapter is interesting in itself.

In the same year the Spanish version of *Gandhi* by Robert Payne appeared, which was a very well conceived book and which created a good deal of interest in the Iberian Peninsula. It may be kept in mind that the writings of Gandhi himself were even then mostly unknown and were not translated till the end of the decade. Understandably, much more than Payne's book was the reception given to the Spanish edition of the work of Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins *Freedom at Midnight* which appeared in 1976, which presented to a certain extent a vivid picture of the independence movement, although with a rather limited comprehension of the Indian psyche and the personality of Gandhi. Be that as it may, this sensational book played its role in giving an idea of what had been the century's biggest freedom struggle.

From that moment on, Gandhi was considered in Spain as an appropriate subject for the reading of children and young people alike, and biographies of the Mahatma started appearing in the editorial series of illustrious men, in which the values are brought into limelight, outside the context of the person's immediate surroundings. Thus, Gandhi is presented not as a product of his times, but as an eternal figure who could have existed at any time and place. All these books were based on material taken from foreign sources and these were generally written

by writers who were given this task to do so and not because they had any special enthusiasm for the Indian leader.

A good example of this type of writing is *Gandhi* by Juan Ignacio Herrera, published in 1979. The work is full of quotations which are used for dramatic effect and its object is to moralize in a definitive way, so far so that a code of Morality is spelt out, as the hallmark of Gandhi's activities. The language, moreover, is rather heavy for the reader.

However, during this period, we got a biography of Gandhi, which even though it was not a definitive one, was undoubtedly, the best among all those that have been written in Spain. It is *Life and Thoughts of Mohandas Gandhi* written by Marisa Martinez Abad. It is a well-documented effort running to two hundred pages and written in an attractive style, without pretending ever to be an erudite treatise. There are very few dialogues and the quotations are not very lengthy, which together with its elegant style makes the book an enjoyable reading. The book consists of several short and effective chapters, where Indian concepts are explained with clarity. There is an intention, although rather briefly to present all the aspects of interest that the theme may have, thus making the book comprehensive. It may be mentioned that it is a good biography in the real sense of the word: the *milieu* is described, although in a secondary way and the work concentrates on the psychology and the ideas of the protagonist. The author acknowledges that she has directly drawn from *Universal Voyage in Search of the Truth* of Eugene Lefreue, *To India* of Raimundo Panikker, and the biographies of Payne and Nanda. The work begins with an introduction to the history of India, to its religion and art. It contains a geneological tree of the Gandhi family from 1670 onwards and his personal history, at the same time showing the figure amidst the Hindu-Muslim conflicts. The main concern is in describing positively the Gandhian spirituality, which is called as "practical idealism" and its effectiveness in real life. She does not exaggerate any particular element, as we find in other publications on Gandhi and she has a precise sense for discretion. The book includes facets such as no other Spanish biographer mentions (for example, the relations of Gandhi with Gokhale or the comments on Gandhi by Churchill and George V). It is, definitely, the best work on Gandhi written by a Spanish writer.

As a contrast to the book we have just commented upon, we have one which descends to the level of a defamatory libel

and which only bears the name of Gandhi in the title as a publicity stunt. We refer to the book *The Destruction of Gandhi* (1983) written by Manuel Leguineche, which appeared in Spain shortly after Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi* was released in Spain. It is a sensational work, written in a journalistic style, in which the author describes his experiences in India of India's wars with China and Pakistan and the Janata government in 1977, presenting a fanatically negative vision of the country and those who ruled it. References is made to several British sources, in which it is "the continuous degradation of India" that is mentioned and a systematic mockery is attempted of Hinduism and Indian spirituality. Very little is said on Gandhi by way of factual analysis, but an attempt has been made at dysmythification of his charismatic figure, by describing him as "naked Fakir", "holy caricature", and an "anachronism converted into myth". He is presented as a Puritan, excessively preoccupied with sexual themes and as a highly intransigent person: "With his sons he was a tyrannical, aggressive, cruel, an unjust father" (p. 193). His way of wearing clothes, of speaking about his private life is ridiculed. The author while referring to Gandhi's political life, presents him as a kind of messianic dictator, and even goes on to say that he dominated India of his times as if he was a God and Nehru was his Prophet. Unfortunately the book does not tell us who was this Gandhi whom he has criticized so much, nor does the author refer to Gandhi's role in the history of India freedom struggle.

Thereafter, the books that have been published in Spain on the Mahatma have been biographies to be read by the youth, such as *Gandhi, the Leader of Pacifism* (1983) by E. Sotillos and *Gandhi* (1986) by Juan Antonio Garcia Barquero; both the books are general in nature and describes the modern India and its culture and philosophy. These books do not deal in depth with the realities of British colonialism and the Indian freedom movement. They are not also true biographies. They are structured in brief chapters, given a sort of over-view, with an abundance of illustrations and without any intention of dealing with the life of the Mahatma. They write about his human profile, his doctrine of poverty and austerity and they give some anecdotes and quotations from his books.

We have mentioned so far the Spanish writings on Gandhi. But at the present moment the Spanish interest in India is rather limited. Since the words and actions of great men have a perennial significance it is hoped that the interest in the teachings of Gandhi

will grow in future, which will lead to better documented writings on this great and strange figure. □

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AESTHETICS AND ACTION IN GANDHI'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

A. J. Parel

There are those who think that Gandhi was too much of a moralist to have had any settled views on art and aesthetics. He did not write any creative work of fiction or poetry or drama. His life-style approximated to that of the poorest of the poor who had little knowledge of the finer things of life. But in Gandhi's case appearance was not reality. He shared with great artists one basic insight about human affairs—the role and the power of symbols. As Nirmal Kumar Bose, his secretary during the Bengal tours of the 1940s, noted, Gandhi “knew that mankind thirsted for symbolism.” (Bose, 1953, p. 141). And E. M. Forster summed up Gandhi's achievements well when he stated that his achievements were comparable to those of great artists: “He is with the great artists, though art was not his medium.” (Radhakrishnan, 1956, p. 315).

In Gandhi's early writings one comes across occasional, but significant, references to his interest in Indian art. On the 1902 visit to Jaipur he took time out to visit the museum there: “Jeypore is a wonderful place,” he noted. “The Albert Museum is a far better building than the Calcutta one and the art section is by itself a study. The Jeypore school of art appeared to be flourishing under its Bengalee Superintendent.” (CW. 3: 272). *Indian Opinion* of 17-9-1903 carried an article on Indian art. It noted that the

Maharaja of Mysore was "bent on encouraging Indian art, and on reviving it in a most practical form." The article quotes a lengthy passage from Sir W.W. Hunter's description of Indian art and architecture as found in his book *Indian Empire*. *Indian Opinion* of 26-3-1910 carried a review article of E.B. Havell's *Art Administration in India*. The 16-4-1910 issue of the same journal had a report on a "Mohamedan Art Exhibition" in Munich; and the issue of 18-6-1910 contained a summary of E.B. Havell's lecture on "Something to be learnt from Indian Art," delivered to the Society of Arts, London.

The point is that Gandhi was not as ignorant of art and aesthetics as some people seem to believe. He was well aware of the theory and history of Indian art.

I

In this paper I enquire into the question of whether, according to Gandhi, there is a connection between aesthetics and political action. Several facts make such an enquiry both valid and pertinent. To begin with, there is the fact of Gandhi recommending two works on art criticism—*What is Art?* by Tolstoy and *A Joy for Ever (or The Political Economy of Art)* by Ruskin—as supplementary reading for *Hind Swaraj*. Why would Gandhi do this unless he saw a connection between the thesis of these works and that of his own fundamental work? *What is Art?* is especially important for our enquiry, since, in addition to recommending it to the readers of *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi had also caused it to be translated into Gujarati (CW. a: 103)—a fact which highlights the high regard in which he held this work.

Then there are the famous debates of the 1920s between Gandhi and Tagore, between the activist and the poet. At the heart of these debates lies the broader question of the compatibility between political action and aesthetic creativity, or to put the question even more broadly, between poetry and action. In addition, there is the important interview on art which Gandhi granted in 1924 to Ramachandran, a former pupil of C.F. Andrews, but at the time of the interview, a student at Santiniketan. This interview contains a brief but coherent account of Gandhi's position on art and aesthetics. What makes this interview particularly interesting is Gandhi's use of the case of Oscar Wilde to illustrate his own position on art and aesthetics.

Finally, there is the 1931 conversation between Gandhi and Romain Rolland on the question of aesthetics. Here again Gandhi

gave a brief but succinct explanation of where he stood on the question of aesthetics and what he thought its relationship was or ought to be to *satya* (truth).

Both the personalities involved here—Tolstoy, Ruskin, Tagore, Oscar Wilde, Romain Rolland—and the questions raised—the connection between aesthetics and ethics, between beauty, truth, and goodness, between action and creativity—are worthy of consideration in their own right. But when considered in relation to Gandhi's political philosophy, they assume a special significance in that they throw useful light on the nature of that very philosophy.

To place our enquiry in its broader context, it is useful to remember that towards the end of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth centuries two opposed conceptions of art and aesthetics were competing for adherents. One of these proclaimed the autonomy of art: art was not only expressive of the self but also independent of ethics and sound societal norms. The other school saw art as part of the fabric of life, and as such, in harmony with ethics and the well-being of society. To put the differences in their widest form, the debate was on the question of whether beauty was separate from, and independent of, goodness or whether it was in harmony with, and subordinate to, it. The proponents of the autonomy school, among others, were Nietzsche, and in England Oscar Wilde, while the proponents of the opposite school, were among others, Tolstoy and Ruskin. Indeed, Tolstoy's opus magnum, *What is Art?* is the most comprehensive attack on the antinomian tendencies of new aestheticism.

During the same period, there was also a parallel debate taking place between roughly two opposing theories of politics and political action. On the one hand there were those who defined political action in terms of reason of state and assertion of will, as the maximization of utilities through the exercise of power. Politics in this view was necessarily the struggle for power, and state the monopolizer of all means of legitimate violence. The individual was defined in terms of radical individualism and rationality in terms of instrumental efficiency, concerned only with means, not ends. Politics and political action in this view had no use for art and aesthetics, except in a utilitarian sense as a means for entertainment and money-making.

But politics was also to be taken in the alternate sense, as the pursuit of the good life, understood as the actualization of the human potential, made possible by a life of virtue, lived in community.

Here power is exercised not for the sake of domination of others but rather as a means of effective service of one another. In this conception, the self is seen not only as related to other selves but also to something that transcends humanity itself. In this conception, politics and aesthetics are seen as compatible with one another.

The question we will have to raise in our enquiry is this: what is the conception of politics and what is the conception of aesthetics that Gandhi espouses? And would the answers to these questions throw some useful light on our present understanding of the nature of his political philosophy?

II

Of all the empirical data before us, Tolstoy's *What is Art?* is unquestionably the most significant. Art for Tolstoy is one of the conditions of life (Tolstoy, 1924, p. 170) or an organ of life (p. 297). The indispensability of art for the proper conduct of life invalidates the claims of those who see art as autonomous and independent of the conditions of life. Tolstoy rejects the notion of art for art's sake. Art is a means of communication among humans, being as indispensable to life as speech is: by words humans interchange thoughts and by art they interchange feelings (p. 297). Art is concerned with feelings or emotions, and Tolstoy entertains both an inclusive and a narrower conception of art. In the inclusive sense, art embraces everything from cradle-song, jest, mimicry, the ornamentation of houses, dress and utensils, to church service, buildings, monuments, and triumphal processions (p. 174). In the narrower sense "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them." "To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced and, having evoked it in oneself, then by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art." (p. 173).

The internal criterion of art, for Tolstoy, is its infectiousness, its capacity to evoke in others the same feelings which the artist has experienced himself. (pp. 275–76). "If a man is infected by the author's condition of soul, if he feels this emotion and this union with others, then the object which has affected this is art; but if

there is no such infection... then it is not art. And not only is infection a sure sign of art, but the degree of infectiousness is also the sole measure of the excellence in art." (p. 275).

Tolstoy asserts that even though art has its own internal criteria, there are also external criteria whereby the subject matter of art can and should be evaluated. Goodness being the highest aim of life (pp. 189–90) the subject matter of art should be in harmony with goodness. Our life is nothing but a striving towards the good, i.e., God. "Goodness is really the fundamental metaphysical perception which forms the essence of our consciousness: a perception not defined by reason. Goodness is that which cannot be defined by anything else, but which defines everything else." (p. 189). Accordingly, beauty remains subordinate to goodness: beauty "not only does not coincide with goodness, but rather is contrary to it; for the good most often coincides with victory over the passions, while beauty is at the root of all our passions. The more utterly we surrender ourselves to beauty the farther we depart from goodness." (pp. 189–90). The separation of beauty from goodness, the hallmark of new aestheticism, according to Tolstoy, is also its fundamental weakness.

All good art, according to Tolstoy, proceeds from what he calls "the religious perception of the age" (p. 278). And by religion he does not mean religion in the credal or doctrinal sense, but religion as that which reveals the true meaning of life. Normally this is expressed by a "few advanced men" of a given culture. "And it is by the standards of this religious perception that the feelings transmitted by art have always been estimated." (p. 279). In our time, the religious perception is "the consciousness that our well-being, both material and spiritual, individual and collective, temporal and eternal, lies in the growth of brotherhood among men—in their loving harmony with one another." (p. 281). In former times religious perceptions united only some people: in our times it seeks to unite all, without exception. (p. 283). Art in our times should therefore be appraised on the basis of whether it divides or unites humans. Anything that promotes hatred against humans cannot be the subject matter of good art. "The task for art to accomplish is to make that feeling of brotherhood and love of one's neighbour now attained by only the best members of society, the customary feeling and the instinct of all men." (p. 332). Its destiny "in our time is to transmit from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling the truth that well-being for men consists in their being united together, and to set up, in place of

existing reign of force, that kingdom of God—that is, of love—which we all recognize to be the highest aim of human life.” (p. 333). Tolstoy feels that art is indispensable to the process of ushering in a peaceful world. At the present time cooperation among humans is made possible largely by means of the external instruments of coercion—the law, police, international organizations, and the like. He wants peaceful cooperation among humans to emerge freely and without coercion. Here art has its specific role to play, viz., that of changing our violent nature: “Art should cause violence to be set aside.” (331).

Tolstoy identifies five obstacles which he sees as standing in the way of art exercising its proper role today. The first is the high cost of art, which makes it inaccessible to the ordinary people; the second is the exploitation by artists of the sexual instinct and the commercialization of art considered as means of amusement and pleasure; the third is the exaggerated importance given to artists as if they were supermen unbound by the conditions of ordinary life; the fourth is the priority given to beauty over ethics, something of which the Decadents, the earlier Oscar Wilde, and Nietzsche were guilty; and the fifth is the use of art for patriotic purposes.

What did Gandhi imbibe from *What is Art*? In the absence of any explicit statement from Gandhi, the critic is faced with a methodological difficulty. He or she can best solve the difficulty by looking for the points of congruence between *What is Art*? and *Hind Swaraj*. These include the importance Gandhi attaches to the need for experiencing swaraj; swaraj, according to chapter XIV of *Hind Swaraj*, has to be more than a purely intellectual and legal concept; it has to be also something that can change the individual internally. Such an experience would reveal the truth of what constitutes the good life and the nature of the means of realizing that truth. The Gandhian actor must first experience swaraj within himself or herself, only then can he or she infect others with the same feeling. The experience of swaraj that Gandhi speaks of in *Hind Swaraj* is similar, I believe, to the aesthetic experience of the artist that Tolstoy speaks of in *What is Art*?

Then there is Tolstoy's 'religious' criterion of distinguishing good art from bad art, namely, the ability of the symbols to infect others with the feeling of brotherhood, irrespective of racial or sectarian or cultural differences. Art should enable us to recover our common humanity. Gandhi's use of prayer services in this sense were artistic in the Tolstoyan sense of art.

Finally, the idea that art should contribute towards restricting the role of violence is also congruent with the teaching of *Hind Swaraj*. Art is an important means of promoting love-force or *ahimsa*.

III

Turning now to Ruskin, *The Political Economy of Art*, compared to *What is Art?*, is a slight volume of two lectures first delivered in Manchester in 1857. It was reissued in 1880 under the changed title of *A Joy for Ever (and Its Price in the Market)*. It marks the beginning of Ruskin's critique of the harmful effects of the industrial revolution on the arts and on our attitude towards labour, and it anticipates the ideas developed in *Unto This Last* (1860). It looks at political economy from the perspective of the proper management of labour and from that of the artistic needs of the national community. Political economy or "citizen's economy" is the science of managing a nation's labour. The latter must provide for both utility and splendour. Labour well applied is sufficient to provide for both—people's basic needs, pleasant objects of luxury, healthful rest, and serviceable leisure. Poverty is not the result of evil in human nature but of the mismanagement of labour. The art of managing labour means that everybody in a nation must find something to do: for it is "inactivity, not our hunger," that ruins a nation. (Ruskin, 1911, p. 26). Idleness of the population leaves a country in disorder.

Human labour must meet not only the physical needs of the worker but also his or her emotional needs. The fault of labour in an industrial society is that it aims at meeting only the physical needs of the people. How a nation meets the physical and emotional needs of its people will depend on that nation's specific circumstances. Accordingly, the management of labour has to be adapted to those circumstances. Ruskin's basic rule here is that blankets must come before laces. In other words the application of technology must be appropriate to the nation's specific circumstances: "as long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long there can be no question at all but that splendour of dress is a crime. In due time, when we have nothing better to set a people to work at, it may be right to let them make lace and cut jewels; but as long as there are any who have no blankets for their beds, and no rags for their bodies, so long it is blanket-making and tailoring we must set people to work at—not lace." (p. 59).

What did Gandhi see in *The Political Economy of Art*? Applying the criterion of congruence with ideas expressed in *Hind Swaraj*, two ideas seem to suggest themselves. First, the idea of the need for an adequate concept of labour. Every one in the nation should engage in some kind of productive labour, and labour itself must be looked upon both as a means of meeting the physical needs of the body and as a form of *yagna*, satisfying the emotional needs of the soul. Secondly, the management of India's labour must be adapted to the needs of India's poor and the technology in question should be adapted to their actual capabilities. The Ruskinian principle of blankets before laces finds its application in *Hind Swaraj* in the rediscovery of the *charkha* and weaving.

IV

The Gandhi-Tagore Debates

Between 1921 and 1925 three significant exchanges between Gandhi and Tagore took place. The immediate context of the debate was Gandhi's launching of the non-cooperation movement in 1920. It was Tagore who took the initiative. For he found many things wanting in Gandhi's philosophy of non-cooperation. The first round of these exchanges began in March 1921 with Tagore's three "Letters to a Friend" (CW: 20, pp. 539–41). Under scrutiny were Gandhi's notions of nationalism, *swaraj*, and non-cooperation. Modern nationalism is alien to India, Tagore pointed out ("We have no word for 'Nation' in our language," p. 539); "it never fits us." India, true to her traditions, must stand for humanity, not nation. Accordingly, *swaraj*, as advocated by Gandhi, seemed to belong to the sphere of *maya*, not real truth. (Ibid.). In so far as its goals were political and material, "*swaraj* is not our objective. Our fight is a spiritual fight"—to emancipate Man from the politico-temporal meshes he has woven around him. As for non-cooperation, it represented negativity and asceticism: "No in its passive moral form is asceticism and in its active moral form is violence." (Ibid.). It will prove to be an obstacle to the true meeting of East and West and would destroy love, the "ultimate truth of the soul." "The idea of non-cooperation unnecessarily hurts that truth." (p. 540).

Gandhi's reply, published under the title "The Poet's Anxiety", (Ibid., pp. 161–64) referred to Tagore as "the poet" throughout the

exchange. Drawing attention to the Upanishadic doctrine of *Neti*, Gandhi responded that "rejection is as much an ideal as the acceptance of a thing. It is as necessary to reject untruth as it is to accept truth... Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good." (p. 163). The Poet, therefore, has been "unnecessarily alarmed at the negative aspect of non-cooperation." (Ibid.). Moreover, colonial India, Gandhi pointed out, had lost the power of saying 'no' to political authority. "Non-cooperation is the nation's notice that it is no longer satisfied to be in tutelage.... And if India is ever to attain the swaraj of the Poet's dream, she will do so only by a non-violent non-cooperation." (p. 164). In Gandhi's eyes, non-cooperation contains a "message of peace and good-will to a groaning world." It is designed to supply India with a platform from which to preach that message.

The second round of the debate took place late in 1921 with Tagore's article entitled 'The Call to Truth' (*Modern Review*, Calcutta, XXX, October 1921, pp. 429–33, de Bary, 1960, pp. 792–97). Seen from Tagore's poetic perspective, Gandhi's leadership role had become problematic: he appeared more like a guru reinforcing the atavistic tendencies of blind obedience and abdication of reason and critical judgement. As Tagore read the signs of the times, a New Age was dawning on the world—the age of creativity, individual freedom and universal amity. Gandhi seemed to be out of step with the spirit of this new trend, and seemed to take India back to the days of guru-worship and "self-atrophy." His stand on the *charkha* and weaving, in particular, seemed to Tagore quite unacceptable. "To one and all he simply says: Spin and weave, spin and weave." (de Bary, p. 793). This is hardly the call suitable for the New Age. Why should everyone spin? And how can swaraj be won by spinning? What is the proof? "Where then, I ask again, is the argument, that in our country swaraj can be brought about by everyone engaging for a time in spinning?" If big machines can stunt human growth, Tagore warns, so can small machines, such as the *charkha*. Indians have taken to the *charkha* simply on Gandhi's authority, and blind authority even to so great a man as Gandhi can only lead to regression. It will only reinforce the traditional "illusion-haunted, magic-ridden, slave-mentality" of the past. "The *charkha* in its proper place can do no harm, but will rather do much good. But where, by reason of failure to acknowledge the differences in man's temperament, it is in the wrong place, there thread can only be spun at the cost of a great deal of the mind itself. Mind is no less valuable than

cotton thread." (p. 794). It is creativity and individuality that have to be awakened if swaraj is to be meaningful. In a passage that will catch Gandhi's critical attention, Tagore writes: "when the bird is aroused by the dawn, all its awakening is not absorbed in its search for food. Its wings respond unweariedly to the call of the sky, its throat pours forth songs for joy of the new light." (pp. 796-97).

Gandhi's reply, entitled "The Great Sentinel," is one of the most spirited short pieces that he ever wrote (CW: 21: pp. 287-91). "True to his poetical instinct." Gandhi remarks, "the Poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their day's food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flown during the previous night." (p. 291). Then came the decisive blow of the entire debate. Sustaining the metaphor of the birds, first introduced by Tagore himself, Gandhi continues: "But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. For millions it is an eternal vigil or an eternal trance. It is an indescribably painful state which has to be experienced to be realized. I have found it impossible to soothe suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem, food. They cannot be given it. They must earn it. And they can earn only by the sweat of their brow." (Ibid.).

Gandhi's point is that at the root of India's woes lies the mismanagement of its people's capacity for labour. There is no emotional bond between the city-dwelling, powerful, rich, educated Indians and the village-dwelling, poor, idle, underemployed Indians. Tagore, by implication, seemed to be unaware of this. Gandhi reminds him that the vast majority of Indians who live in villages suffer from hunger because they have no work to buy food with: India lives in her villages, and the cities live on the villages. But the city people act as brokers and commission agents for the big houses of Europe, America and Japan and not care for India's poor. The result is that India has been bleeding economically. "The circulation about her feet and legs has almost stopped. And if we do not care, she will collapse altogether." (pp. 288-89).

For the "famishing and the idle" the only acceptable form in which God can dare appear is work, wages, and food. The spinning wheel represents work, wages, and food accessible to

even the illiterate. "Hunger is the argument that is driving India to the spinning-wheel." (p. 289). It is the "reviving draught."

Gandhi connects the idea of *yagna* or sacramental work to spinning. He sees justification for this in the *Gita*, III. 8–16, where the wheel, work, and *yagna* are brought together. "I cannot imagine anything nobler or more national than that for say one hour in the day we should all do the labour that the poor must do, and thus identify ourselves with them and through them with all mankind. I cannot imagine better worship of God than that in His name I should labour for the poor even as they do. The spinning wheel spells a more equitable distribution of the riches of the earth." (Ibid., p. 308). "I do indeed ask the Poet and the page to spin the wheel as a sacrament" (p. 288).

The irony is that it became the duty of the activist Gandhi to explain the symbolism and the ethic of the *charkha* to the poet Tagore. The *charkha* for Gandhi represented many things: the dignity of labour, the necessity of labour for the idle and the underemployed, the expiatory labour due from India's rich, the need for sympathy between the rich and the poor, for solidarity between India's urban and rural inhabitants. It would appear that in Tagore art had become too remote from the vital concerns of the suffering people around him.

In 1925 Tagore returned to the debate, this time with an article under the title "The Cult of the Charkha" (CW: 28: pp. 482–84). The use of the *charkha*, in his view, represented repetitive work, dulling the mind and sapping the creativity of those who engaged in it. It embodied the worst in mechanical labour. For Tagore abstention from the *charkha* had become a matter of conscience: he could no longer be a "follower of the charkha cult." Gandhi was giving the *charkha* "a higher place than is its due" in the scheme of national reconstruction. (p. 483).

Gandhi replied on 5 November 1925 with the article "The Poet and the Charkha" (CW: 28: pp. 425–30). He generously denied the rumour that jealousy was at the root of Tagore's continued sniping at Gandhi. As Gandhi saw it, the debate had little to do with personality issues, but it had everything to do with poetry and action. Poetry creates its own tools, whereas action uses tools made by others. "The Poet lives in a magnificent world of his own creation—his world of ideas." Gandhi on the other hand, lives in a world of "somebody else's creation"—that of the spinning wheel. "The Poet is an inventor—he creates, destroys and recreates." Gandhi, by contrast, is an "explorer" who discovers the practical

uses of existing things. The Poet presents the world with "new things," Gandhi "merely shows the hidden possibilities of old and even worn-out things." (p. 426).

Gandhi took no offence at Tagore's exaggerations and inaccuracies, which he considered to be an instance of an artist using poetic licence. "Painters and poets," Gandhi remarked, "are obliged to exaggerate the proportions of their figures in order to give a perspective." (p. 427). The truth of the matter was that he had not asked "everybody to spin the whole of his or her time to the exclusion of all other activity." As Gandhi assured Tagore, he did not want the poet to forsake his muse, the farmer his plough, the lawyer his brief and the doctor his lancet. The *charkha* had to be used by everyone but in a way appropriate to his or her life situation: "the famishing and the idle" were to spin for a living; the half-starved were to spin only to supplement their income; while the rich and well-off were to spin thirty minutes daily—"to adorn" their life and as a sign of solidarity and penance. He invited the Poet himself to spin half an hour daily: and if he did this, observed Gandhi slyly, "his poetry would gain in richness. For it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now." (p. 427).

These debates brought into the open two views of art and two different views of political action. Gandhi represented the view that good art is at once inspirational and communicative and compatible with appropriate action, while Tagore represented the view that art is primarily self-expression and contemplation and apolitical.

In the end, however, Gandhi and Tagore seemed to have patched up their differences. Tagore wrote the following in *Sunday Statesman* of 13 February 1938: "I have since learnt to understand him [Gandhi] as I would understand an artist not by the theories and fantasies of the creed he may profess, but by the expression in his practice which gives evidence to the uniqueness of his mind." (Cited in Roy-Chowdhury, 1982, p. 152).

V

We now turn to the 1924 interview on art that Gandhi gave to Ramachandran. Arranged by C.F. Andrews, it took place at New Delhi. We have only Mahadev Desai's account of it as reported in *Young India* of 13-11-1924, and in his *diaries* (Desai, 1969, pp. 242-46; and CW. 25: pp. 247-50). As for the identity of

the interviewer, it was G. Ramachandran, a former pupil of C.F. Andrews and at the time of the interview, an art-student at Santinikethan. The interview covered a number of topics: the question of Gandhi's perceived indifference to art, the relationship of art to truth, beauty, and morality, why he had not written on art, and the case of Oscar Wilde.

Ramachandran's first question, as it were, put Gandhi on the spot: "How is it that many intelligent and eminent men who love and admire you, hold that you consciously or unconsciously have ruled out of the scheme of national regeneration all consideration of Art?" Gandhi replied that in this matter he had been "generally misunderstood" (CW, 25: p. 248). He said that he had sufficient art in him, but that he had his own conception of it. He distinguished the inward and the outward in art, and he was more concerned with the former than with the latter. "The outward has no meaning except in so far as it helps the inward. All true Art is thus an expression of the soul. The outward forms have value only in so far as they are the expressions of the inner spirit of man." (Ibid.). He agreed that true art expressed the urge and unrest in the soul in terms of words, colours and shapes. Art of this sort had "the greatest appeal" to him. "I can claim, therefore, that there is truly sufficient Art in my life, though you might not see what you call works of Art about me. My room may have blank walls...This, however, does not mean that I refuse to accept the value of productions of Art, generally accepted as such, but only that I personally feel how inadequate these are compared with the eternal symbols of beauty in Nature. These productions of man's Art have their value only so far as they help the soul onward towards self-realization." (CW, 25: p. 249).

Gandhi was then questioned on the relationship between beauty and truth. He did not agree with the claim that beauty has priority over truth; for himself, he would reverse the order: truth was primary, and beauty only secondary. "Whenever men begin to see Beauty in Truth, then true Art will arise." (Ibid.). And by beauty he did not mean just physical beauty resulting from harmony of parts of the whole. For truth may manifest itself "in forms which may not be outwardly beautiful at all." Gandhi then used the story of Socrates and Phidias, the Athenian sculptor, to illustrate his point: The fabled physical ugliness of Socrates did not prevent Phidias, who was accustomed to see beauty in outward forms, from recognizing the inward beauty that Socrates represented. (Ibid., pp. 249-50).

The question of how the most beautiful things have often been created by men whose own lives were not beautiful was raised. Gandhi replied that "Truth and untruth often co-exist; good and evil are often found together. In an artist also not seldom the right perception of things and the wrong co-exist. Truly beautiful creations come when right perception is at work. If these moments are rare in life they are also rare in Art." (Ibid., p. 250).

Gandhi was perfectly aware that many who called themselves artists, and were recognized as such, did not show any trace of the soul's "upward urge and unrest." And it was to illustrate this point that he invoked the name of Oscar Wilde: "I can speak of him, as I was in England at the time that he was being much discussed and talked about." The problem with Wilde, Gandhi asserted, was that he succeeded in "beautifying immorality." (p. 248).

Wilde poses a methodological difficulty for the Gandhian critic. How seriously must one take Gandhi here? To treat Gandhi as an expert on Wilde would be as naive as to dismiss him as mere name-dropper. Yet the statement "I can speak of him, as I was in England at the time that he was being much discussed and talked about," deserves respectful consideration. The reference must be to Gandhi's first stay in London between September 1888 and July 1891. As a matter of fact four of Wilde's major works relevant to our present enquiry appeared during this period. Two of these dealt with literary criticism, (viz., *The Decay of Lying* which appeared in *The Nineteenth Century* in January 1889 and in book form in 1891, and *Critic as Artist* which appeared in July and September 1890, also in *The Nineteenth Century*, and in book form in 1891); the third, with social criticism, (viz., *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, which appeared in February 1891 in *Fortnightly Review*), and the fourth was of course a work of fiction (viz., *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, published in July 1890 in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* and in book form in 1891). It would have been physically possible for Gandhi to have read one or more of these works. However that might be, Gandhi's characterization in 1924 of Wilde as "beautifying immorality" accurately reflects the Wilde of the 1888-91 period. Take for example the following from the Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, "No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style." (Murray, 1989, p. 48). Or, from *The Critic as Artist*, "All art is immoral...emotion for the sake of emotion is the aim of art, and emotion for the sake of action is the aim of

life, and of that practical organization of life that we call society. Society, which is the beginning and basis of morals, exists simply for the concentration of human energy, and in order to ensure its own continuance and healthy stability it demands, and no doubt rightly demands, of each of its citizens that he should contribute some productive labour to the common weal, and toil and travail that the day's work may be done. Society often forgives the criminal; it never forgives the dreamer." (Ibid., p. 274). Or "...action of every kind belongs to the sphere of ethics. The aim of art is simply to create a mood... Thought is degraded by its constant association with practice." (Ibid., p. 278).

Or, "Aesthetics is higher than ethics. They belong to a more spiritual sphere. To discern the beauty of a thing is the finest point to which we can arrive.... Aesthetics, in fact, are to Ethics in the sphere of conscious civilization, what, in the sphere of the external world, sexual is to natural selection. Ethics, like natural selection, make existence possible. Aesthetics, like sexual selection, make life lovely and wonderful, fill it with new forms and give it progress, and variety and change. And when we reach the true culture that is our aim, we attain to that perfection of which the saints have dreamed, the perfection of those to whom sin is impossible, not because they make the renunciations of the ascetic, but because they can do everything they wish without hurt to the soul, and can wish for nothing that can do the soul harm, the soul being an entity so divine that it is able to transform into elements of richer experience, or a finer susceptibility, or a newer mode of thought, acts or passions that with the common would be commonplace, or with the uneducated ignoble, or with the shameful vile." (Ibid., pp. 295–96).

Gandhi's negative stand on Wilde could have been reinforced by Tolstoy's criticism in *What is Art?*: "The Decadents, and esthetes of the type one time represented by Oscar Wilde, select as a theme for their productions the denial of morality and the laudation of vice." (Tolstoy, 1924, p. 303). However we interpret Gandhi's remarks on Wilde, one thing seems indisputable: Gandhi did not belong to the camp of the antinomian new aestheticism; he belonged to the opposite Tolstoy/Ruskinian camp. Furthermore, in matters regarding art criticism he was no novice, and could hold his own at least in an interview with an art-student from Santinikethan.

It is also in the Ramachandran interview that Gandhi explained why he did not wish to write anything formal on art.

"Would it not be well for you to put them (ideas on art) down for the benefit of the younger generation in order to guide them aright?" (CW, 25: p. 250) Ramachandran asked. The following was the reply: "That I could never dream of doing, for the simple reason that it would be an impertinence on my part to hold forth on Art. I am not an art student, though these are my fundamental convictions. I do not speak or write about it, because I am conscious of my own limitations.... My functions are different from the artist's and I should not go out of my way to assume his position." (Ibid.). Gandhi was of course professing Socratic ignorance here, much the same way he professed ignorance upon being asked by S. Radhakrishnan to write on Indian philosophy. Gandhi replied: "The fact that I have affected the thought and practice of our times does not make me fit to give expression to the philosophy that may lie behind it. To give a philosophical interpretation of the phenomenon must be reserved for men like you." (S. Gopal, *Radhakrishnan*, 1989, p. 138).

VI

Gandhi's last formal statement on art and aesthetics is found in his dialogue with Romain Rolland, the French savant and one of Gandhi's more distinguished biographers. The dialogue took place in Rolland's villa in Geneva, in 1931, when Gandhi was on his way back to India from the London Round Table Conference. (Rolland, 1976, pp. 206–14).

The dialogue began with Rolland giving a brief account of his own position on art and aesthetics. Art for him was the source of joy, which in turn was the product of beauty. Joy and beauty had priority over truth. For he could more readily find joy in beauty than in truth, which often was hurtful and disruptive. In taking this stand he acknowledged that he stood in opposition to Tolstoy. "Great art has harmony as its essence, and it brings peace, health and equilibrium to the soul. It communicates them at once by the senses and by the mind for both senses and mind have the right to joy. Beauty manifests itself in many ways; beauty of line, beauty of sound, beauty of colours etc., and at the bottom of them all, the inner order, the hidden harmony, which is in essence moral. The troubles of the soul are filtered and sublimated through it." (Rolland, p. 208).

Rolland's brief exposition was meant to serve two purposes, for he too was concerned about Gandhi's asceticism and his alleged

indifference to beauty. "All this expose," Rolland said, had an unexpected double aim: "to fight against the notion attributed to Gandhi that suffering is pleasing to God and to assert the rights, which he seems sometimes to neglect, of beauty and the natural and exalting love which healthy men have for her." (Ibid., p. 209).

Gandhi's response was brief and unambiguous: for him truth had priority over joy and beauty. "For me, the definition of truth is a universal one. The truth is made manifest in many ways. Any art which is inconsistent with truth, which is not linked to truth, is not art. I would not classify art as a thing distinct from truth. I am against the formula 'art for art's sake'; for me art must be based on truth, I reject beautiful things which pass for art if they express non-truth instead of truth. I would subscribe to the formula: 'Art brings joy and is good'—but on the condition I have stated. By truth in art I do not mean the exact reproduction of exterior objects; it is the living object which brings living joy to the soul and which must elevate the soul. If a work does not achieve this, it is worthless. If truth does not bring joy, it is because truth is not in you." (Ibid.).

Gandhi then spoke briefly on (an unnamed) Hindu religious song of morning and commented on the formula *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, which asserted the priority of truth over knowledge and joy. Though joy was inseparable from truth, the attainment of truth often involved suffering; taken in its broad sense, meaning "disappointments, fatigues, and afflictions without number." (Ibid., p. 209).

The conversation then moved on to the subject of two of the greatest artists of the West: Goethe and Beethoven. Gandhi agreed with Goethe's dicta, read to him by Rolland, that harmful truth is preferable to useful error and that all laws and all moral rules can be reduced to one single truth. (Ibid., p. 210).

The interview ended with Rolland playing, at Gandhi's request, the Elysian Fields scene from *Orfeo*, the first orchestral piece and the flute melody, and the andante from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The request was made in consideration of Rolland's great expertise on Beethoven and the great love Mira Behn (who was accompanying the Gandhi party) had for the great composer. At the end of the recital, Rolland explained the music at some great length to Gandhi and then asked for his reactions. As Rolland noted, Gandhi replied with "a mischievous and candid little laugh: 'It must be good, since you say so!' (Ibid., p. 212).

The dialogue with Rolland is remarkable in at least two

respects. First, it shows, once again, that Gandhi is closer to the Tolstoy/Ruskin view of art and aesthetics than he is to the Wilde/Tagore/Rolland view of the same. Second, the 'religious' element in art, whether the art came from the West or the East, made a direct appeal to him. This was in sharp contrast to his reaction to Western secular art. Thus while the Fifth Symphony did not make a great impression on Gandhi even with Rolland's commentary, Newman's poem, "Lead Kindly Light," always evoked in him a deep religio-aesthetic response. The same was true of Gandhi's contrasting reaction to the secular and religious paintings of the West. Rolland describes how Gandhi on his visit to the Vatican museum could only smile and shake his head as he passed the Michelangelo Frescoes, the Botticellis etc. for they made "no effect" on him. But the reaction was quite different as he saw the fourteenth-fifteenth century crucifix on the altar of Sistine Chapel: "this is the only thing which moves him," notes Rolland. (pp. 254-55). Again, before a painting of the Crucifixion, Gandhi was so moved, that as Rolland tells us, "tears came into his eyes." (p. 235). According to Madeleine Slade (Mira Behn), Rolland summed up his conversation with Gandhi on art as follows: "We also exchanged our ideas on art, from which he does not separate his conception of truth, nor from his conception of truth that of joy, which he thinks truth should bring." (Slade, 1960, p. 149).

VII

In the foregoing pages, we have considered Gandhi's theoretical position on art and aesthetics. The question now arises as to whether art and aesthetics for him were topics for debate and discussion only or whether they were for him also a source and an inspiration for action. It would appear that there is a discernible degree of unity here between theory and practice, and that art and aesthetics did contribute to the vitality of his political action.

To understand the link between theory and practice in Gandhi's attitude towards art, it is important to take note of the emphasis he places on experience as a precondition for effective action. In chapter XIV of *Hind Swaraj* he says that one must first experience swaraj within oneself before one can credibly and effectively persuade others to pursue swaraj. But what does the term experience mean here? Certainly it means something that transforms the whole person, something that gives a fresh insight into the

meaning of human existence, something that is very akin to what philosophers and theologians call metanoia. Gandhi's personality was such that it was capable of undergoing such experiences at critical junctures in his life. Experiences of this sort transforms the quality of one's emotional, imaginative, moral and intellectual sensibilities. In Gandhi's case these experiences were linked to his aesthetic sense, which in turn was rooted in his religious sense. The artistic in him led him to action more than it did to the appreciation of beauty. It awakened in him spiritual forces or the sense of the sublime rather than an ethically neutral sense of the beautiful.

Accordingly, in Gandhi the pursuit of self-realization and the commitment to the service of others so interpenetrated that for all practical purposes they became one living force. (See the last chapter of his *Autobiography*). In certain individuals the aesthetic sensibility leads them in the direction of self-cultivation, self-expression and enjoyment of inner freedom which does not entail any serious commitment to action. For them it is the aesthetic experience that takes humans to their highest destiny, one which separates them from the ordinary folks. The leading proponent of this view in the nineteenth century was Nietzsche. In Gandhi, as in Tolstoy and Ruskin, the aesthetic experience remained firmly within the bounds of social ethics and led to an awareness of unity between the self, humanity and God.

Strange as it may seem, one of the insights that Gandhi derived from his defining experience of swaraj was the importance of labour for the realization of human purposes. This insight is at the basis of his rediscovery of the *charkha*, which occurred in 1909, when he did not even know the difference between a *charkha* and a loom. Weaving for him became what the sacrament is to an orthodox Christian—a daily means of spiritual regeneration. The prayer meetings, with its hymns and especially the *Ramdhun*, played a religio-aesthetic role in his active life. His active life, as it developed into full bloom, is hardly imaginable without the *charkha*, the khadi, the prayer meetings and hymn singing. Through them the aesthetic entered into daily routine. As can be seen from his Diary, he kept faithful account of the number of times he turned the *charkha* during his stay with Rolland: 167 rounds on December 7th, 170 on the 8th, 160 on the 9th, 204 on the 10th, and 178 on the 11th. (Rolland, pp. 162–63). Sceptics may see in this signs of neurosis, or something equally unpleasant; but for Gandhi the turning of the wheel was nothing short of an

aesthetico-religious experience.

Gandhi was not an artist in the sense Tagore was one: art in him did not find expression as poetry or fiction. But he was an artist in the Tolstoyan/Ruskinian sense of being an artist—one who through deep experience had gained an insight into the meaning of life, and one who then was able to transmit that meaning to others through appropriate symbols and practices.

If aesthetics and action harmonized in Gandhi's own life, is there anything in that achievement that is transferable to the theory of political action as such? In other words, does Gandhi's personal achievement meet the criterion of universalizability? Here we must recount the essentials: Gandhian type of politics starts with self-questioning, self-reform, *swaraj* or *metanoia* of some sort. Someone wholly committed to a life of accumulation and consumption in the liberal mode cannot meaningfully practice Gandhian politics. The liberal "veil of ignorance" drawn over his or her identity is not available to the Gandhian. In fact he or she would have to lift that veil and know who he or she really is. This is what the experience of *swaraj* means and requires. Such an experience reveals the truth about the self—that the self is not radically isolated from other selves nor from the rest of reality itself; nor does it reveal a self as combining with other selves only for the strictly utilitarian purposes of security and prosperity. Indeed, the experience of *swaraj* reveals the self as being related to other selves on the basis *satya* (truth) *daya* (compassion), and *dharma* (duty). Rights no doubt are very crucial for the ordering of political life but only on the basis of the priority of duties. Institutions of government and laws must reflect the notion of the self as revealed in the experience of *swaraj*. Politics in this account is not by essence a coercive phenomenon, it becomes coercive only in proportion as it departs from the right notion of the self, the principles of *satya*, *daya*, and *dharma*. Gandhi reintroduced into modern liberal politics the Socratic stipulation of self-knowledge, self-examination and self-reform as the starting point of meaningful civic life. Such a beginning however did not lead him to adopt an aristocratic view of politics, as it did with the disciples of Socrates in ancient Greece. Rather it led to a democratic view of politics which owed much to Ruskin and to St. Matthew's Gospel. For *sarvodaya* contains an essentially liberal democratic notion.

The experience of *swaraj* and the development of symbols and practices corresponding to it are the preconditions for the

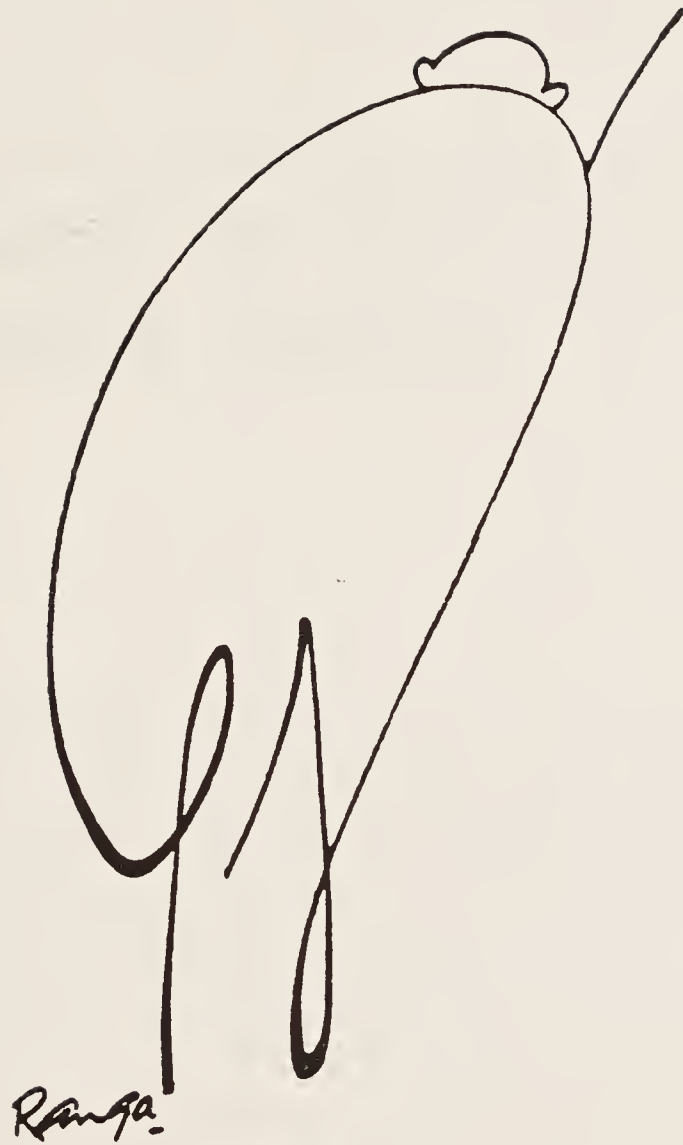
successful conduct of Gandhian politics. What these symbols and practices would be, would vary from country to country, and within even the same country, from time to time. As Lanza del Vasto, a French follower of Gandhi remarked, practising Gandhian politics does not involve looking for lepers sitting on the Place de la Concorde or the peasants of Normandy and the vine growers of Beaujolais redistributing their land to the unemployed. (Lanza del Vasto, 1974, p. 202). It does mean, however, that one must introduce into the practice of politics the idea that internal spiritual change is a necessary condition for the development of a peaceful politics (Lanza del Vasto, 1972, p. 114). The symbols and practices that Gandhi himself developed—the *charkha*, the prayer meetings, etc. are not transferable outside India. They were invented for meeting the specific needs of a specific country. Even in India they may have outlived their usefulness. What is of permanent value in Gandhi's theory of action is his recognition of the need to link action with a spiritual experience of *swaraj* which then becomes capable of artistic expression in ways that fulfills the aspirations of the actor and the reasonable needs of the neighbour.

□

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Relevance of Gandhi

RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN ECONOMICS TODAY

Vasant Sathe

In the post-independence period of more than forty-six years, the common people of India have shown to the world that although a large number of them may still be unacquainted with the three 'R's, they have imbibed the basic moral and social values through education imparted to them over thousands of years by saints and savants through the method of direct audio-visual information. These people have also traditionally inherited a system of rural self-government based on what was known as the panchayati raj or government by the elders, elected by the people. It was these local self-governments or direct democracies which, mainly through the moral authority they wielded as well as through the well-accepted social system that prevailed over thousands of years, were mainly responsible for stability and preservation of Indian civilisation. It is because of this tradition that even during the struggle for Independence, the leaders of India representing most of the political parties had projected that a free India would have a democratic form of political system which would be governed through elected representative governments. Similarly, during this struggle itself, the most prominent being the movement organised under the Indian National Congress, systematic attempts were made to discuss and adopt the concept of economic planning and agro-industrial growth through modern industries and technologies.

Here, I would also like to briefly touch on the Gandhian concept as regards the economic field. Gandhiji was not only a leader who guided the country to independence through a non-violent struggle, but was a person with a deep insight into the social as well as the economic aspects of life. Like all great men, he thought of man and life in its totality and is known to have written and expressed his views on practically all aspects of life. His philosophy was based on deep religious faith in the concept of God, the creator and in trying to seek harmony in all His creation of which human beings were only a part, although an important one. He, therefore, sought synthesis, understanding, cooperation and accommodation in a peaceful manner among conflicting interests, whether in political, social or economic fields. In the economic field, whether it was while leading a struggle of textile workers against the employers in Ahmedabad early in 1918 or for the rights of the peasantry which he headed in Champaran, in Bihar, Gandhiji emphasised the non-violent approach of self-sacrifice for the sake of truth—satyagraha—and insisted on shunning any attempt to pressurise the opponent through violent means. His thesis was that landlords should feel and behave as trustees towards the rest of the society and the tenants and the landless in the field of agriculture. He sought the assistance of economic experts to evolve a whole economic concept based on a decentralised and agro-based cottage and small-scale industrial sector in the hope that the entire socio-economic structure would be such that the majority of the people of India, who lived in its villages, would become self-reliant and self-sufficient as far as their day-to-day basic needs of food, clothing and shelter were concerned. He was against the concept of centralised mode of production based on economy of scale utilising modern industrial technologies in the form of centralised factories and industries as he felt that this would deprive a large number of people of the decentralised method of production, such as, the textile sector.

Here I would hasten to add that Gandhiji was not against the introduction or use of modern means of communication, like the railways, ships, automobiles or airlines. He was not against the use of modern scientific developments in the field of medicine, surgery and other fields of research and development. He freely used railways as a means of transport, and had undergone an operation for appendicitis in 1924. Gandhiji, who was himself a well-educated modern Bar-at-Law, did not suffer from any bigoted bias. He had realised that production of steel or railway engines

and coaches or automobile cars and buses or big ships or aeroplanes and such other basic industrial capital goods would have to be produced through centralised modes of production. But even in this case, his emphasis was on encouraging growth of ancillary production on a decentralised basis, as is being done successfully in countries like Japan today. Gandhian economics, rightly understood, therefore, tries to seek a synthesis and what can be described as the middle path in the modes of economic production and distributive activity. If considered in the correct context and perspective, the Gandhian method of decentralised means of production as well as distribution would automatically prevent the growth of a centralised mode of ownership, control of the means of production as well as the resulting capital formation. It is common knowledge that it is the accumulation and control of this surplus, called capital, in the hands of a few, that is the basis and cause of both economic and resultant political exploitation of the many by a few.

Thus, it is not the fault of any one individual, but it is the system itself which, very much like the earlier feudal one, leads to concentration of power, both economic and political, in the hands of a few individuals or groups of individuals called by different names—companies, cartels, multi-national agencies, corporations, etc.—that inevitably lead to an unscrupulous race for authority and power without any consideration for its implications on the lives of millions of people, either within a country or internationally.

In a country like India where, even today, more than seventy per cent of its population lives on and off agriculture and agro-industries, the entire concept of planning must aim at increasing economic opportunities to the large populations spread out in the rural areas, as indeed it cannot be done in any other manner. Such a planning should also provide for allowing and encouraging the consumer goods industry to grow in the rural areas itself so as to provide large scale employment to growing population of the rural youth in their own habitat. Indeed, this will be in keeping with the traditional concept of self-reliant rural and village economy. Unless this is promoted in a positive manner so as to develop the purchasing power and market in the rural areas themselves by a positive plan of decentralised production of consumer goods, there is a serious danger of unemployment growing in the rural areas and large scale migration taking place from rural areas to the urban pockets. The over-crowded urban pockets bursting

with migrated population not only create economic problems, but also social problems of hygiene, moral laxity and economic as well as political tensions. The environmental pollution caused in these concentrated urban areas is harmful both to social hygiene as well as to medical health.

In this context, one of the most far-reaching reforms of significance that has been earnestly taken up by the Narasimha Rao Government is through the enactment of the 73rd Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1992, which has paved the way for decentralisation of power, both political and economic, to the grass roots level. It is eagerly hoped that this long awaited measure will speedily usher in Gandhiji's dream into reality of bringing 'swaraj' to every village, treating it as a republic or panchayat having full powers to shape its own destiny.

This important enactment aims at ensuring dispersed and balanced economic development as well as devolution of political and fiscal power at the village level so as to usher in the concept of Gram Swaraj as was envisaged by Gandhiji and Vinoba Bhave. In the economic structure of India's village, there was a homogeneous and harmonious self-sufficiency in-built in the entire structure. Traditionally, a community acquired the character of a village only when it had all the facilities or most of them necessary for a stable rural life available in the village itself. With the advent of an industrial society, both the life and the self-supporting economy of the village was disturbed. A large chunk of the rural population dependent on their centuries-old traditional occupations was deprived of the source of their livelihood and the emerging society did not provide them alternative employment in the rural area itself and were forced to become either landless labourers or to migrate to urban centres unwillingly in search of avocations to eke out a living.

The production of agro-based as well as other consumer goods alone can provide gainful employment to our vast population and ensure balanced equitable growth. We must realise that market economy can operate equitably only when the entire population of a given society is able to participate in that market. When majority of the people do not have adequate purchasing power, the market economy can only result in large scale exploitation of the majority of population for the benefit of the elitist and consumerist few. Hence, economic restructuring should essentially suit India's conditions.

Of course, the Constitution Amendment Act on "Panchayati

Raj" will ensure that the Panchayat institution will no more remain the playthings of the arbitrary exercise of executive power. It is the people of the village who will determine the profile of the reconstituted Panchayat. It will seek to achieve responsive administration in rural India—in other words, genuine Panchayati Raj—through the twin devolution of administrative and financial powers. The source of power will lie only as far away as the Panchayat Ghar and not some distant state capital or the even more distant capital of the country, and thus the power of the vote will become the power of enforcement rendering the power-broker redundant.

Here, I may be permitted to sound a note of caution. By merely providing an elective institution, howsoever effective and broad-based it may be, all the problems of people living in villages cannot be solved. It should be remembered that Panchayat system as tried in the post-independence era has not so far succeeded mainly because of its having become irrelevant to the socio-economic life of the village in an industrial society with its emphasis on centralism which has been common both to capitalist and socialist systems. Both depended on producing goods in capital intensive mode based on economy of scale making vast human resource victim of forced worklessness. Hence, it is imperative that politically decentralised Panchayati Raj also becomes economically 'Gram Swaraj'.

The idea of Panchayati Raj essentially is based on the principle of involving the people themselves directly in the management of their affairs because it is the people who know best what their problems are, what their priorities are and what could be the best solutions to suit their requirements. They are very well aware that the only *Sanjivini* (the legendary life-giving medicine) for all their miseries is productive employment. We will have to make a positive policy decision to ensure that all consumer goods which are capable of being produced in a decentralised and labour-intensive small-scale basis, must essentially be produced in this manner and all production of such articles on centralised basis will have to be deliberately banned, decentralised and dispersed. Modern technology and scientific development make it possible to establish industrial units to produce practically all essential consumer requirements in the village or within the district itself. It is a fallacy to think that goods cannot be produced on decentralised basis. It is possible to have machines and tools operated with motor power to produce all these articles on decentralised basis. It would

be in keeping with our national tradition of pursuing different avocations in the rural areas, which in the modern sense would differ only to the extent that it is not caste-oriented.

Such a concept can succeed only if we are able to ensure the availability of infrastructure inputs on a much larger scale and at an economic cost. Such infrastructure inputs are: power, basic metals such as steel and aluminium, plastics, synthetic yarns and fibres, fertilisers, roads and other means of communication, storage and marketing, etc. These infrastructure inputs are mostly capital-intensive in nature and can be best produced on economies of scale. But even here modern technology makes it possible to produce power, steel, coal, etc. on medium- and small-scale basis and we must resist the pressure of vested interests against allowing such production. The ultimate objective has to be maximum production of these inputs at minimum costs and at internationally and internally competitive prices. I think one of the basic and most essential infrastructure for rural development is electricity. Despite the stupendous progress achieved in the field of rural electrification during the successive Five-Year Plans, thousands of villages are still deprived of this basic catalyst of development and prosperity. I think a time has come when we should take a bold and non-conventional decision to invest heavily in solar and wind energy systems for producing electricity in far-flung villages located in isolated pockets and inaccessible terrain. This alone can help our rural people in having adequate power to meet the requirement of growth in the shortest possible time.

The adequacy and free availability of the above basic inputs is absolutely essential for a self-reliant village economy we are contemplating. As stated earlier, the idea must be to provide employment for producing goods and services which create a demand in the rural areas themselves. It is only such productive work that can provide the purchasing power to the people in the rural areas and can thereby create an economic market for the vast population living in the rural areas. It is only when the process of demand and supply chase each other and grow within the rural sector that a decentralised and balanced growth of our entire population can take place. Then alone will political decentralisation at the grass-roots level become a reality. Such a situation will bring about a sea-change in the quality of life in our rural areas. However, simultaneously decongestion of our urban centres will have to be taken up as a positive measure. Such far-reaching changes only will ensure a balanced growth of our nation and prevent the

growth of a highly distorted and exploitative socio-economic system, which today is threatening not only our economic but also our social and political life, and in turn, the very integrity and unity of our country.

One of the imperatives of organising such a decentralised and balanced economy is in the matching of costs and prices of infrastructure inputs in such a way that the average man in the rural areas has the purchasing power or credit facilities to buy these inputs, without provoking inflationary pressures. In the ultimate analysis, inflation only means abundance of money supply against available goods. And abundance of money, particularly in the hands of a few, is a highly dangerous phenomenon. The producer of goods and services in a rural economy will have to be ensured adequate remuneration and return to afford a purchasing power that makes him a viable member of the market. It is only in such a situation that the law of demand and supply can freely operate within the framework of a liberalised economy.

With the dynamic changes that are contemplated through the introduction of grass-roots democracy, both in rural areas as well as urban, an entirely new economic policy for providing wherewithal to these grass-roots democratic units will have to be thought of. Because, with representative power vested in people's hands at the grass-roots level and with the expectations of the people rising, if the wherewithal of generating economic growth is not provided, such a situation might result in frustration which can sooner or later prove to be highly explosive. There are no half-hearted or compartmental solutions to this challenge.

I may point out here that substantial scope exists for deriving higher and more stable growth in agricultural output with increased employment potential in large parts of the country where agriculture has been stagnant or is growing at a slow pace. A strategy for accelerating agricultural growth in these regions would have a substantial impact on the problem of unemployment and poverty in rural areas. In the regions with relatively better development in agriculture, diversification into non-food high value crops like vegetables, fruits and flowers and the development of agro-processing industries provide significant scope for employment generation.

Diversification of the rural economy into non-agricultural activities, an already observable trend in certain parts of the country, needs to be promoted through appropriate policies. Promotion of activities having forward and backward linkages

with agriculture would be an obvious choice. Those utilising locally available skills and catering to rural markets need to be consciously planned and promoted. Special attention would need to be paid to the technological upgradation of many of these activities which suffer from very low productivity levels even though markets for these products exist. High priority should be accorded to the construction of infrastructure items like rural roads and schools and also to undertaking a major rural housing programme. Such schemes provide excellent opportunities for wage employment to unskilled and low-skilled workers, particularly during non-agricultural seasons.

During the eighties and particularly after the assumption of Narasimha Rao Government, major changes have taken place on the industrial front. A series of initiatives taken by the Government of India have led to the progressive dismantling of avoidable controls and the creation of an environment conducive to the free, unfettered growth of industry, increase in productivity, reduction in costs and improvement of quality. The economic reforms programme carried forward over the last three years have acquired a strong momentum. The process of deregulation, decontrol, disinvestment and debureaucratisation towards an open, foreign investment-attracting, export-oriented and globally integrating economy has started yielding results. India's economic reforms have been hailed all over the world, by foreign governments, international financial institutions, business and investment enterprises, academics and media groups. There no longer exist any doubts about their irreversible nature with the broad consensus among the diverse political parties, business and related interests.

Gandhian economics must be considered in the light of Gandhiji's philosophy of life in its totality. Gandhiji himself not only propagated certain basic ideas relating to harmonious living as close to nature as possible, but practised these ideas himself. In personal life he was advocating not only simplicity but greater reliance on things which are naturally available and which man could convert himself for his use in the form of consumer goods, the main emphasis being on self-reliance of individual household to the maximum extent possible. This is where he preached making of cloth from cotton fibre by a person himself right from the stage of spinning of the yarn to the stage of making cloth from it. He was, however, realistic enough to realise that every household, although it can spin yarn, may not be able to have a handloom and therefore he was willing to plead a cooperative effort between

those who would spin yarn and those who would weave it. His main thrust was on the principles of a barter, as it were, of producers of consumer goods in the rural economy itself. This was in keeping with the traditional system.

As far as food is concerned, his emphasis was again on natural food produced with the help of organic manure available in the nature. In the field of medicine his greater reliance for day-to-day purposes was on the traditional herbal medicines based on Ayurveda which was known to India for centuries. Although, as said earlier, he was not against modern methods either of research or advanced science, he knew that for Indian masses, the best medicines and treatment for common ailments were available in the natural flora. There is already greater awareness of the use of *neem* for its anti-bacterial qualities, of *isabgol* as a natural laxative, and of garlic, turmeric, ginger, clove, lemon-grass, cinnamon, and a host of other herbs. He even advocated and practised mud therapy for stomach ailments.

Gandhiji's emphasis on environmental hygiene is well known. He not only propagated that human excreta should be utilised for conversion into manure along with cowdung and other animal dung, but also emphasised that the village as a whole and individual families must keep their premises absolutely clean. This emphasis was also essential for preventing diseases. Socially, he made maintenance of hygiene a duty of every household and condemned the practice of a particular community removing and cleaning the night soil. This occupation was also responsible for social stigma like untouchability. Gandhiji at once condemned this practice and wanted to have it abolished, but for that he suggested transformation of the work system itself.

Gandhian approach to basic education is well known. To him education meant that right from childhood, each citizen apart from knowing the three 'R's, should also know vocational trades which will enable him to contribute for the production of wealth not only for himself and his family, but for the entire society. Thus, vocational training became an essential part of the Gandhian system of education.

As a social reformer, Gandhiji propagated total abolition of the caste system which, according to him, was a 'cardinal sin' and curse of the Indian society. Even in the field of religion, his emphasis was on equal respect for all religions and full understanding between the followers of different religions.

Thus, we will see that Gandhiji took a holistic view of life

and wanted all aspects of life—social, economical and political—to be dovetailed for the creation of a society which will not only be harmonious with nature, but harmonious with itself and where, for self-aggrandisement of the few it will not be possible for an exploitative structure to grow and prevail. Whenever he talked of non-violence, it was this larger concept, where no force or aggression is invoked or resorted to for narrow selfish ends. The Gandhian way of life, therefore, cannot be looked at in isolation and has essentially to be considered in its totality. □

LEGACY OF NON-VIOLENCE

Coretta Scott King

For twenty years now, people of diverse races and nationalities, including members of Atlanta's Indian community, have joined together at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for non-violent social change in Atlanta in celebration of the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. We commemorate Gandhi Jayanti, not only to pay tribute to one of the greatest leaders in human history, who had a pivotal influence on Martin Luther King Jr., but also because his message for humanity burns with a special urgency for our times.

In commemorating Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, we proclaim the eternal truth of the ages, that people of all races, religions and nations are forever united in spirit. We proclaim the power of unconditional love, unearned suffering and uncompromising truth and non-violence, so eloquently exemplified in the words and deeds of Gandhi, as the most powerful force for constructive social change ever devised.

In 1936 a group of distinguished African-American clergy led by the great theologian, Howard Thurman, journeyed to India to visit Gandhi. During their interview with Gandhi, Dr. Thurman's wife, Mrs. Sue Thurman, who had accompanied her husband, asked Gandhi if he could come to America and share his teachings with the black freedom movement.

"How I wish I could," said Mahatma, "but I would have nothing to give you unless I had given an ocular demonstration here of all that I have been saying. I must make good the message

here before I bring it to you... It may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world."

Gandhi did not know at that time that a 7-year-old boy growing up in Atlanta would become the leader who would rise to this challenge and fulfil the Mahatma's prophesy. For it was Martin Luther King Jr. who would apply Gandhi's techniques in a non-violent revolution that transformed American society, made democracy a reality for the first time for millions of Americans and inspired liberation movements all over the world.

My husband was first exposed to Gandhian Philosophy as a graduate student at Crozier Theological seminary in Philadelphia. There he attended a lecture about Gandhi delivered by Dr. Mordecai Johnson of Howard University. Martin later would write that Gandhi's message "was so profound and electrifying" that he rushed out after the lecture and bought all the books about Gandhi's life and work that he could find.

As my husband wrote in his first book entitled, *Stride Toward Freedom*: "As I read I became deeply fascinated by his philosophy of non-violent resistance...as I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my skepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see its potency in the area of social reform...prior to reading Gandhi, I had concluded that the love ethics of Jesus were only effective in individual relationships...but after reading Gandhi, I saw how utterly mistaken I was."

"Gandhi," Martin said, "was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale...it was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and non-violence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking for so many months...I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom...this principle became the guiding light of our movement. Christ furnished the spirit and motivation and Gandhi furnished the method.

If not for Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr. may not have discovered the power of non-violence in social struggle. In that event the United States might be a very different country today and it might be a very different world as well. If not for Martin Luther King, Jr. humanity might not have discovered the universality of non-violent resistance, for Martin showed that Mahatma Gandhi's

teachings could be applied with great success in a western cultural context.

The method of non-violent protest and direct action pioneered by Gandhi and carried forward by Martin Luther King, Jr. has been instrumental in ending the Cold War and bringing democracy to the former Soviet States, Eastern Europe and the Philippines. Yet the threats of terrorism and environmental disaster are rising on every continent. Thus the followers of Gandhi and King must not rest on the glory of the achievements of non-violence. We are challenged as never before to spread the creed of non-violence to the distant and dusty corners of every nation before peace is secured for all people.

On this historic anniversary, let us remember that even in the oppressive environment of South Africa, Gandhi was able to win major concessions and reforms for Indians in South Africa, including the validation of their marriages and the cancellation of repressive taxes. South Africa provided the testing ground for his non-violent strategy. This year I was privileged to join with Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg to celebrate the birth of South Africa's new democracy. President Mandela and other leaders of the anti-apartheid movement have paid tribute to Gandhi's leadership as an inspiration to their freedom struggle. Mr. Mandela's leadership style—his uncompromising insistence on truth and self-determination for his people his courtesy and gentlemanly demeanor in dealing with adversaries and his personal example of forgiveness are all in keeping with Gandhian non-violence. Just as South Africa helped to make Gandhi, his non-violent strategies helped to make a new South Africa, in which people of all races are learning how to live together in friendship and cooperation.

Our world also desperately needs Gandhi's ecumenicism. During the last decade we have seen growing conflicts between people of different faiths in nation after nation. Gandhi found wisdom and inspiration in the holy scriptures of *all* religions without ever forsaking his own faith. Somehow we must hold up his example of tolerance and respect for every religion until people everywhere understand that no one religion has a monopoly on righteousness and reverence for God.

On this 125th anniversary of Gandhi's birthday, we should also celebrate Gandhi's active commitment to women's rights. "I am uncompromising in the matter of women's rights," said Gandhi. "In my opinion, she should labor under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat the daughters and sons on a

footing of perfect equality." On another occasion he predicted with prophetic accuracy, "In the future free state it will be open to us to have women presidents," a prediction which was fulfilled by Indira Gandhi's election as leader of the world's largest democracy. He took pride in nurturing, healing and caring for children and he relished domestic chores usually reserved for women. Gandhi's example still challenges men of goodwill everywhere.

Considering Gandhi's extraordinary humility and his rejection of honors during his lifetime, it is ironic that programs commemorating his birthday are being celebrated on this day all over the world. Yet we do his memory no disservice if we make this a day of re-commitment to the causes to which he dedicated his life.

I believe with all of my heart and soul that Gandhian non-violence is more relevant and desperately needed than ever before. As Martin said, "If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought and acted, inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony. We may ignore him at our own risk."

The light that came into our world 125 years ago on this day still burns in the hearts and deeds of all those who would build a more loving world. We must celebrate this birthday anniversary with a sacred pledge to work and pray and struggle together in a spirit of *ahimsa* until we make every sword a plowshare and every spear a pruning hook, so that we may fashion a global community of peace with justice for people of all races, religions and nations. With Gandhi's vision and King's dream burning in our hearts, let us rededicate our lives to the creation of a new world, where truth and harmony, brother and sisterhood will reign supreme. □

WHAT DID GANDHI MEAN BY SATYAGRAHA

Arun Gandhi

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi believed satyagraha began with the self: "If one is not able to practise it at home one would not be able to practise it at all," he wrote. Gandhiji's non-violence is, therefore, a way of life. He believed excellence in a career without excellence in character is meaningless. He was convinced human beings must find an equitable balance between materialism and morality to create an equitable society.

In 1946, as a 12-year-old youth, I lived with Grandfather for more than a year. I was not old enough to grasp the profundity of his philosophy but Grandfather had a way of using daily occurrences to bring home his lesson. I was twice blessed since my parents, father Manilal and mother Sushila, had devoted their lives to promoting Gandhiji's satyagraha in South Africa, giving me an added opportunity to understand closely how satyagraha can become a part of one's life.

The greatest tragedy is that we take Gandhiji literally or dogmatically. "I leave behind no dogmas" he said and once even expressed the wish that all his writings be consecrated to the flames of his pyre. His philosophy of life was based on Truth and commonsense. It was evolutionary; he insisted that his philosophy be modified but not mutilated. Anything that remained static must become putrid: this is as true of philosophy as it is of food. We

need not hang on to the *charkha*, to khadi and to vegetarianism as the panacea for all the ills that face us in India.

"To the hungry," Gandhiji said. "God comes in the form of bread." While we race after materialistic baubles and back-pocket all concern for ethics and morality those who hunger for survival are not likely to listen to sermons.

Historically, people found it more convenient to "follow me in life, worship me in death but not make my cause their cause," Gandhiji lamented. We idolize great people, distort their philosophies and conveniently shirk our responsibilities towards the society that sustains us. Materialism and morality, Gandhiji said, are inversely related. The success of one results in the failure of the other.

There are some absolutes in Gandhiji's philosophy of satyagraha (non-violence) that cannot be ignored. Absolute truth; absolute love; absolute discipline and absolute justice are the four fundamental pillars on which satyagraha stands. Moreover, satyagraha is a positive philosophy, not a negative one.

Gandhiji's philosophy can best be understood in the context of the violence we commit everyday. Gandhiji classified violence into passive and physical forms. We are painfully aware of the physical violence—the wars, murders, rapes and the myriad physical manifestations of violence. What we ignore is the passive violence—the oppression, exploitation, discrimination, hate, anger and the millions of ingenious ways in which we express our dislike for each other.

Passive violence leads to anger and hate culminating in physical violence. We could, therefore, work until doomsday for a world without physical violence and not achieve any degree of success as long as we ignore the root of the violence. Gandhiji said: The absence of war does not mean there is peace. By the same token the absence of rioting in the cities of India does not mean the population is living in harmony. The insidious passive violence continues unseen to play its nefarious role, and when it becomes intolerable the passive violence erupts into physical violence.

Anger is at the root of much of the violence—passive and physical. Anger is also a powerful emotion. It is to human beings what petrol is to an automobile. Without petrol a car will not work. Without anger human beings will not be motivated. But, just as petrol has to be pure for the engine to run smoothly anger has to be constructive for it to bring about a solution to the problem that generates the anger.

In one of his numerous lessons Gandhiji compared anger with electricity. He said electricity is a powerful energy but when it falls upon us in the form of a bolt of lightning it is destructive and deadly. However, we do harness the same powerful energy and bring it into our homes for the good of human beings. Though we bring electricity into our homes we cannot afford not to respect it. Anger can be just as destructive if it is allowed to run rampant, or constructive if channelled respectfully for the good of humankind.

Killing people or destroying property is not a solution of any problem. Indeed, it only aggravates the problem and perpetuates it *ad infinitum*. Hindu-Muslim intolerance and caste prejudices are examples of unsolved Indian problems. History is replete with stories of periodic caste and communal violence. Has all that bloodshed helped solve the problem? No, it has only left for posterity an unenviable set of records of man's inhumanity against man.

Gandhiji believed in the unity of all people irrespective of their caste, colour, creed, gender or any other ingenious divisions we may create. Those of us who lived with Gandhiji are aware that his prayers every morning and evening consisted of hymns from Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Christian and other religious scriptures. He sincerely believed that Indians, for their own good and the good of their country, must learn to accept and appreciate the differences in society. Gandhiji never did anything simply because it appeared to be a good gesture.

When he declared the 'scheduled castes' in India would be called 'Harijans' it was not tokenism that compelled him. He sparked a powerful revolution. We either failed to understand him or chose to ignore his explanation. He said: "The untouchables have earned the right to be called Harijans (Children of God) because of the oppression they suffered. *The rest of the Hindu society will earn the right to be called Harijans when they have atoned for the suffering inflicted.*"

This last sentence is important. He envisioned a Hindu society of Harijans without any caste distinctions. If this revolution appears to be running amok the fault was not Gandhiji's but ours for not living up to his expectations.

In yet another lesson Gandhiji advised me to develop a mind like a room with many open windows. Let the breeze flow in from all but refuse to be blown away by any one. It is obvious what he meant. Anyone who has a closed mind will suffer the

same consequences as he would in an airtight room without any ventilation. Both will putrify. An unhealthy mind in a healthy body is a deadly combination.

Gandhiji taught me to be proud of my glorious heritage and to respect and be proud of the heritage of others. Hinduism is the most tolerant and non-violent belief systems in the world. I hesitate to call Hinduism a religion because it transcends ritualism and offers one the freedom to incorporate the good from other sources. It is the only belief system that discards dogmas and permits commonsense to flourish.

Much to everyone's chagrin the Hindu house today is like an unreasonable Hindu family squabbling over the colour on the walls of their house. They are divided between those who want to get new paint to change the colour and those who want to break down the house to change the colour.

Gandhiji said meaningful independence would come to India only when *people begin to lead and make the leaders follow*. India is not a nation of sheep but of responsible, thinking human beings. Gandhiji did not mean "independent" in the destructive sense. We will be "independent" only when we break the shackles of anger and hate and prejudice.

Gandhiji joked about wanting to live for 125 years. He said he had so much to accomplish that he would need 125 years to see the fruition of his dream. And, what was his dream? In "India of My Dreams" he talks of a country with a glorious heritage that has the capacity to give moral leadership to the world. He writes about a country where there is peace and harmony between diverse people—a true "*Ram Rajya*".

In the 125th year the world is divided between those who believe Gandhiji was a Saint and, therefore, unrealistic and others who believe he was a Dreamer and, therefore, unrealistic. The fact is there was nothing wrong with him or his philosophy. The fault lies with us. Gandhiji based his assumptions on the premise that human beings are good and capable of rising to higher expectations. In the final analysis we have to ask ourselves the very pertinent question: "Are we or are we not as good as Gandhiji expected us to be?" When we answer that question truthfully we will have answered the important question whether Gandhiji's philosophy is relevant today. □

THE RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT

Justice Philip Edward Archer

In 1869, an Indian nationalist known as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born and until he was assassinated in 1948, had an unparelled influence on the moral, political and social development of that great sub-continent of India. It appears that his first two names have been relegated to oblivion not by chance but by ordinary Indians who appreciated his sincerity, his resolve and determination to better the lot of the unlettered and the under-privileged. Indeed they regarded him as a saint and conferred on him the title of "Mahatma" meaning "Great Soul". The historians tell us that he went to London at the age of 19 and qualified as a Barrister and returned to India to practise law at the Bombay High Court.

In 1893, he was invited to South Africa by an Indian business firm. What he witnessed appalled him and he allied himself with movements in opposition to the South African government's restrictions on immigration of Indians to South Africa. Apartheid commenced not in 1948, but as far back as the turn of this century. Both the Boers and the British resented the influx of Indians to the eastern coast of South Africa especially Natal and the surrounding areas. Gandhi fought for the redress of grievances and naked discrimination against these Indians. During his stay in South Africa, racial discrimination was in the ascendant, and Gandhi

from 1893 to 1913, that is for twenty years, advocated the claim of his fellow Indians to equal rights of citizenship. These Indians were mostly small traders or descendants of indentured workers from India.

Gandhi stood for peace and in this political philosophy he preached non-violence in order to achieve political goals. In this philosophy, he singled out non-cooperation and peaceful resistance to persecution and oppression. How did the African-American Dr. Martin Luther King achieve civil rights for his fellow blacks in 1960's? It was through non-violence, peaceful demonstrations and non-cooperation with those who practised racial discrimination. Civil disobedience does not mean violent disobedience. It is the outward manifestation of the revolt of human beings against indignities and injustices. Dr. Martin Luther King derived great inspiration and encouragement from the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.

Today, the world faces not a global conflict as in World War I and World War II, but regional and local conflicts, arising from the intransigence of politicians, the unbridled ambitions of despots and dictators, and the infidelity to agreements reached by world statesmen. Mankind has realized that these conflicts cannot be solved by going to war, but rather through peaceful negotiations between the parties themselves or through intermediaries and mediators. As such the United Nations Organization has been saddled with the task of negotiating peace through peace-keeping forces and humanitarian aid throughout the world.

Gandhi on his return to India took up the struggle for home rule for India. He was a thorn in the flesh of the British government. He did not advocate violence because he was firmly convinced that non-violent non-cooperation could achieve independence for his country. His influence in the shaping of the Indian National Congress was inimitable until he handed over his mantle to others including Pandit Nehru.

One hundred and twenty-five years after Gandhi's birth, his teachings have become not only relevant in India but throughout the world. His early writings and pronouncements incurred the wrath and indignation of his adversaries, but he was a flexible thinker and a pragmatist who was able to remould his views in the light of contemporary development. He was initially opposed to the introduction of machinery to the detriment of cottage industries. Later he was able to modify his views and supported the introduction of scientific technology provided the rural folk

would not be disadvantaged. He regarded Indian civilization and culture as sacrosanct and deprecated the intrusion of western civilization and culture into India. As a nationalist he found the two civilizations incompatible and advocated the preservation of the indigenous civilization.

Gandhi's struggle for the independence of India was the beginning of decolonization in the twentieth century. Many colonies in the Far East gained their independence from their European colonial masters. This trend spread to Africa after the end of the Second World War and the then Gold Coast under the leadership of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah began the struggle for independence which the country (as the first African Nation) achieved in 1957. Decolonization did not end, but swept through the whole continent of Africa. In South Africa, Gandhi's teachings of non-violence and non-cooperation inspired anti-apartheid movements led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to engage in peaceful demonstrations and in non-violent protests throughout cities in South Africa. These non-violent demonstrations pricked the conscience of die-hard apostles of apartheid. The atmosphere today in South Africa is one conducive to the abolition of racial discrimination and reconciliation between all the races.

In April 1994, South Africa held its first non-racial parliamentary elections—a year that will coincide with the 125 Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi who began his campaign in 1893 against injustices and indignities meted out to Indians in Natal by the South African Government. A century later, in 1993, two representatives of the black majority and the white minority, Mr. Nelson Mandela and Mr. F.W. de Klerk were jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace, because of their strenuous efforts to abolish the obnoxious system of apartheid and to bring about a non-racial society in which all human beings will be respected as dignified human beings with equal rights.

Today mankind is living in an age of violence, and the pursuit for peace through non-violent means is being advocated by all nations and member-states of the United Nations—whose role in sending peace-keeping forces to the different parts of our planet demonstrates mankind's yearning for peace. The teachings of Gandhi have become relevant and apposite. The quest for peace throughout the world is being pursued with determination. There is always peace when there is no violence. That the teachings of Gandhi have to be propagated world-wide. His advocacy of non-violence has not as yet reached all the corners of the earth. Politicians

and world-statesmen need to be converted to the teachings of Gandhi so that we can have a peaceful and non-violent world.

On the anniversary of his one hundredth and twenty-fifth birthday, the whole world should salute this lawyer, politician, moralist, pragmatist, peace-lover, non-violent campaigner and "Saint" whose selfless concern for the poor and under-privileged did much for his beloved country. Today mankind is grappling with the problems of poverty and violation of human rights. The teachings of Gandhi—"The Great Soul" should be our guiding star. □

GANDHIAN IDEALS AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

G.L. Peiris

I am firmly convinced that personalities do not represent the dominant strands of history. However towering a personality may appear during his lifetime, and especially at the zenith of power, it nevertheless remains true that human life is too short, and human potential too limited, to make a really substantial impact on the story of mankind.

History, to me, consists of forces, trends, movements and processes rather than personalities. It is the former that mould and nurture the elements that determine the character of social and political institutions. Their influence may be more insidious and subtle, and less visible, than the charisma of individuals who occupy centrestage at given times, but for all that these are clearly the pervasive strands in the fabric of history.

This conviction leads me to entertain some degree of scepticism about the qualities and achievements of individuals as a force significantly contributing to the making of history. I do recognize, however, that this generalization is not invariably sound. In different epochs of history there certainly have been individuals who have made a decisive contribution, and but for whom the history of the period, not only in their own country or region but sometimes on a global scale, would definitely not have been the same.

* The text of the Gandhi Memorial Lecture delivered by Professor G.L. Peiris, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Colombo, at Hotel Taj Samudra on October 27.

Mahatma Gandhi is, without question, one such individual. His place in the history of the human race is assured; and the history of his time cannot be narrated, much less assessed, in any comprehensive sense in isolation from his own identity, character, vision and values.

The depth of his personality and the range of his work make it very difficult to decide how best the material comprising a lecture delivered to pay homage to his memory, could be arranged in such a manner as to be worthy of the personality sought to be honoured. I have decided, after careful reflection, to adopt a somewhat unorthodox approach. I have decided to select four themes which pervade Gandhi's life's work, to quote his own words with reference to each of these themes, so that he speaks for himself and articulates his own cherished beliefs and convictions; and I proceed thereafter to relate the concepts and ideals to which he gives expression in his own inimitable way, to the contemporary environment of South Asia.

Nothing is as crucial to the philosophy which shines through the whole of Gandhi's life as his attitude to, and veneration of, truth.

His conception of truth is explained by Gandhi, as a cornerstone of his life, in the following words:

I often describe my religion as Religion of Truth. Of late, instead of saying God is Truth, I have been saying Truth is God, in order more fully to define my religion ... Nothing so completely describes my God as Truth. Denial of God we have known. Denial of Truth we have not known. The most ignorant among mankind have some Truth in them. We are all sparks of Truth. The sum total of these sparks is indescribable, as yet unknown Truth which is God. I am being daily led nearer to it by constant prayer.

I am but a seeker after Truth. I claim to have found the way to it. I claim to be making a ceaseless effort to find it. To find Truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny, in other words, to become perfect. I am painfully conscious of my imperfection and therein lies all the strength I possess. I lay no claim to superhuman powers: I want none. I wear the same corruptible flesh that the weakest of my fellow-beings wears and am therefore as liable to err as any.

Gandhi's emphasis on these elements of truth, as he perceives them, has a compelling relevance to some of the burning issues of our time. Much of the suffering endured by humanity during successive epochs of history has been the result not of evil or of

wickedness but of bigotry. The world has never been lacking in persons who were unshakably convinced not only that they were right, but that no point of view opposed to their own was worth a moment's consideration. From this, it is but a short step to entertain the belief that there is cardinal merit in suppressing and destroying any countervailing ideology or value system. Indeed, the destruction, root and branch, not only of any competing ideology but of persons professing or living by such ideology may well appear a sacred and inalienable obligation.

This was the stark reality behind, for example, the Spanish Inquisition. In Tudor England Protestants were burnt at the stake by Catholic sovereigns, and *vice-versa*, for the purpose of saving their souls. This was thought to be an act not of iniquity but of supreme solicitude. As the flames consumed the flesh, salvation of the soul was assured. Charlemagne, the founder of the Holy Roman Empire, acknowledged no more sacrosanct duty than that of destroying those committed to "pagan" values. This attitude is exemplified by religious wars, wherever and whenever they have been fought, with consequences which have been uniquely devastating for great segments of humanity.

At the core of it all is unswerving belief in a monopoly of truth. The underlying conviction is that there is only one vision or point of view which is sanctified by truth, and that all other attitudes and approaches must perforce be discarded, if possible by persuasion, but in the final analysis by compulsion or violence.

It is this interpretation of truth that is rejected by Mahatma Gandhi with all the vehemence and sincerity at his command. He speaks of "sparks of truth". Each of us may catch a glimpse of some of these, but the totality of the picture may well defy comprehension by the human mind. There may be some degree of validity in each of several possible approaches to a problem; no approach, therefore, is altogether devoid of value. On the other hand, there is no approach which is absolutely and unreservedly valid, in the sense that it is capable of being identified with justification as the sole repository of truth. There is no message which is more relevant or opportune for the age in which we live.

This approach contains the key to the salvation of the human race today not only in the realm of abstract ideology or metaphysics but, what is of greater significance, in respect of the entire gamut of our political, economic, social, cultural and educational systems.

As a boy of ten years, I vividly recall listening on the radio

to the speech delivered by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, then Prime Minister of India, to the Parliament of Ceylon on the occasion of his visit to our country two years before his death. The statement which remains indelibly embedded in my mind is Nehru's strident exhortation that absolute value-judgments with regard to political or constitutional structures are to be abhorred. He insisted that, the more experience he had of political affairs, the less confident he became about preferring one political or constitutional model to another. All systems have their strengths and their shortcomings. There is a positive as well as a negative side. Whether the benefits of a system outweigh the disadvantages, or vice-versa, cannot be determined *a priori*. This assessment has to be made, of necessity, in relation to the specific requirements and priorities of a given society at a particular stage of its development. A political system which is properly thought to be ideal in one cultural context, may prove an unmitigated disaster in a wholly divergent cultural or social setting. This is a question of empirical judgment and discerning adaptation to specific circumstances. One must be wary of uncritical adulation of political systems which have worked exceedingly well in societies fortified by different historical traditions, and slavish adoption of these systems in one's own country. Equally, implacable hostility to unfamiliar systems is often a sign of lack of imagination or vision.

In our own country during the last sixty years, we have had invigorating experience of no less than three distinct constitutional models—the Executive Committee system which typified the Donoughmore Constitution, the Westminster style Cabinet system of government which dominated both the Soulbury Constitution and the first Republican Constitution, and the Executive Presidential system of government introduced into Sri Lanka by the second Republican Constitution.

If we are to pay more than lip service to the words of Gandhi, refreshing for their sagacity and rational appeal, I would suggest that the need of the hour, especially as we embark upon the exercise of constitutional reform, is to resort to as much flexibility and resilience of mind as possible in evaluating the merits and pitfalls of each of these systems, without prejudice or preconceived notions; to garner from each system selectively its beneficial characteristics while lopping off its excrescences; and to construct for our country a perceptive blend that is suited to the fulfilment of our own special needs.

This ability to consider both sides of the coin is essential in

arriving at a critical appraisal of economic systems, as well. Particularly after the recent events in the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as well as in the light of current trends in the People's Republic of China, there can be no conceivable doubt that the prevalent economic philosophy is that predicated upon private enterprise and the market economy. The growing conviction is that free rein must be given to market forces, and that there can be no greater impetus to economic activity than motivation deriving from private profit. This, however, is not to gainsay that any form of regulatory mechanism with regard to the economy is necessarily obnoxious. There may be situations in which the protection of vulnerable economic interests, such as those of disadvantaged groupings or of local industries at an incipient stage of development, justifiably call for the invocation of some degree of central control. In the context of the developing world it may well be that there is no absolute dichotomy between liberalization and regulation. It may not be desirable, or even possible, to make a straightforward choice of one, at the expense of the other. In the interest of evolving a coherent and satisfying policy which is conducive to maximising harmony at the national level, it may be necessary to combine elements of both strategies. A doctrinaire approach should not be allowed to preclude this.

In the social and cultural sphere, the richness of South Asian life consists largely of the durability and spontaneity of human relationships. Integral to this is a wide spectrum of traditional values which sustain Eastern practices and usages with regard to mutual support. Of particular significance in this regard is the phenomenon of the extended family. The fact that this continues to be a vibrant feature of Sri Lankan society is borne out by the findings of sociologists in our country, on the basis of empirical research, that the harmful effects of migration to the Middle East, for example, on the family that is left behind, are greatly diminished in communities where the support of the extended family is available in substantial form. These traditional structures are placed in jeopardy by such trends as increasing industrialisation and urbanisation and other concomitants of the age of science and technology. Here, again, it seems to me that the real challenge is to reconcile these competing forces and to develop a synthesis which is suited to the genius of our own people.

With regard to education, there is a similar need to formulate and implement a policy that recognizes the value of, and accords appropriate weight to, different forms of education, all of which

address acutely perceived needs of the Sri Lankan community—academic education, professional education, vocational and technical education and continuing education. Each must have its allotted place in the total scheme of educational policy, and a system of choices must be catered for in order to fulfill the multifaceted needs of a complex society.

The second theme which I have chosen from Gandhi's life and work is that relating to tolerance. To use Gandhiji's *ipsissima verba*:

Tolerance implies a gratuitous assumption of the inferiority of other faiths to one's own, whereas ahimsa teaches us to entertain the same respect for the religious faiths of others as we accord to our own, thus admitting the imperfections of the latter.

It was impossible for me to believe that I could go to heaven or attain salvation only by being a Christian ... It was more than I could believe that Jesus was the only incarnate Son of God.

My veneration for others' faiths is the same as for my own faith. Consequently, the thought of conversion is impossible ... Our prayer for others ought never to be 'God, give them all the light Thou hast given to me,' but 'Give them all the light and truth they need for their highest development'. My faith offers me all that is necessary for my inner development, for it teaches one to pray. But I also pray that everyone else may develop to the fullness of his being in his own religion, that the Christian may become a better Christian and the Mohammedan a better Mohammedan. I am convinced that God will one day ask us only what we are and what we do, not the name we give to our being and doing.

The central concept here is that genuine tolerance must never be based on condescension; there must be sincere and profound respect for the opposing point of view, not merely a grudging willingness to put up with it. There must be no feeling of superiority that is entertained *vis-a-vis* the belief or principle that is tolerated. This goes to the very root of the values of multi-ethnicity and cultural pluralism which represent conspicuous features of the political landscape of a great part of the continent of Asia.

I have no doubt in my own mind that the most vexed problem for South Asia in particular to contend with in the next decade will involve the extent to which the concept of unified nationhood can be realistically reconciled with the intensity of aspirations entertained by linguistic, religious and cultural minorities. Must nation states splinter when exposed to the ferocity of inter-racial and inter-cultural conflict, or can some *modus vivendi* be found

to preserve, substantially intact, the nation states of South Asia?

There seems little doubt that any pragmatic *modus vivendi* must necessarily entail sensible arrangements directed towards the sharing of power.

Federalism, of course, is an orthodox model which has been developed in a variety of political cultures to achieve the goal of unity in the midst of diversity. Federalism, however, has aroused unfriendly and often volatile emotions in our own country. Federalism has sometimes been represented as an instrument for the dismemberment or the disintegration of the nation state, rather than as a constitutional mechanism for the sharing of power among different communities, all of whom, despite their differences, regard themselves as belonging to one country. The debate on federalism has been too emotional to permit the applicable issues to be focussed upon and discussed objectively and dispassionately.

Moreover, it has been forgotten that federalism is not a split but a spectrum. There is no single, immutable model of federalism. There are nuances and gradations which can be chosen to suit the requirements of a particular situation. Australian federalism is very different in content and degree from Canadian federalism; the federal characteristics of the constitutional structure of India differ fundamentally from German or Swiss federalism, or from the federalism that used to exist in Yugoslavia. American federalism constitutes yet another significant variant on the model.

Demonstrably, then, there exist a series of choices. Nevertheless, federalism itself is not the only answer to the problem. There are other modalities or structures of devolution which may appropriately be looked at, as viable alternatives.

Whatever model is chosen, the irreducible condition is this: that the minority communities must find it possible to retain their self-esteem and dignity and not have cogent reason to believe that they are denied due process or equality of opportunity in matters which are of importance to them.

If this is to be achieved, I would suggest that three conditions must necessarily be fulfilled:

- (a) There must be an enlightened vision, pervaded by goodwill rather than hatred, with regard to the values and objectives that underpin the devolutionary process;
- (b) these objectives must be accomplished effectively by stable legal mechanisms which do not depend on the magnanimity of individuals and are not susceptible to erosion by administrative procedures;

- (c) the constitutional and regulatory mechanisms must be applied in practice with transparency and sincerity.

The third theme, selected by me from Gandhi's writings on account of its contemporary relevance has to do with morality and politics.

Gandhi, in explaining the reasons why he plunged into a political career, had this to say:

My motive has been purely religious. I could not be leading a religious life unless I identified myself with the whole of mankind; and this I could not do unless I took part in politics. The whole gamut of man's activities today constitutes an indivisible whole; you cannot divide social, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments. I do not know any religion apart from human activity. My devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet with all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.

Politics divorced from religion is a corpse, fit only to be burned.

The important point he makes here is that politics, perhaps more than any other area of public activity, must be stringently controlled by the moral code.

This reflection, again, has indisputable reference to contemporary society. Nothing can inflict greater harm on the body politic than the perception on the part of the community that politics constitute an enclave within which ordinary moral values and standards have no application. Not infrequently, the ordinary man is left with the feeling that, in politics, the guiding principle is expediency, and that it is naive to believe that notions of right or wrong, justice and injustice, have any practical relevance. It is this perception, more than anything else, that results in an overwhelming sense of cynicism which, if it is unchecked by the adoption of timely corrective measures, cannot but in due course erode the very foundations of our political institutions and, consequently, of the democratic way of life itself.

The essential remedy is to reinforce the truth that political power is but a trust; that political authority is entrusted to the hands of the rulers of the day to be used for the public good; that political authority ceases to be legitimate or to be buttressed by any moral justification if it is sought to be applied for the attainment of objectives which have no bearing on the wellbeing of the populace. These notions serve the salutary purpose of underscoring

the primacy of ethical and moral notions within the field of political decision-making.

It must not be forgotten, however, that the application of these standards can become a reality only if there is a vibrant body of public opinion which effectively ensures visibility and exposure of the processes of government in a continuing time-frame.

Closely related to Gandhi's emphasis on the role of morality in politics is his insistence that the end must never be allowed to justify the means. Gandhi pinned all his faith on the civil disobedience movement as the most potent lever for the attainment of India's independence from the British. However, he did not find it impossible to repudiate this movement and to direct its discontinuance when it became apparent to him that the actual implementation of his strategy could not be disentangled from manifestations of violence. He found it an excruciatingly painful decision to renounce this strategy which was so close to his heart, but in explaining the reasons why he made this harrowing decision, he observed:

If India takes up the doctrine of the sword, she may gain a momentary victory; then India will cease to be the pride of my heart. I believe absolutely that India has a mission for the world; however, India's acceptance of the doctrine of the sword will be the hour of my trial. My life is dedicated to the service of India through the religion of non-violence, which I believe to be the root of Hinduism.

Let the opponent glory in our humiliation and so-called defeat. It is better to be charged with cowardice than to be guilty of denial of our oath and sin against God. It is a million times better that I should be the laughing-stock of the world than that I should act insincerely towards myself ...I know that the drastic reversal of practically the whole of the aggressive programme may be politically unsound and unwise, but there is no doubt that it is religiously sound.

I have striven all my life for the liberating of India. But if I can get it only by violence, I would not want it.

The fourth theme I have chosen is connected with Gandhi's vision of freedom for his people. This notion of freedom was not insular or myopic but all-embracing and comprehensive. In particular, he stressed that political freedom shorn of economic opportunity, is a vacuous concept with little meaning for the vast mass of the people.

Gandhi stated:

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men.

Freedom is a mockery so long as men starve, go naked and pine away in voiceless anguish.

Political freedom has no meaning for the millions if they do not know how to employ their enforced idleness. Eighty per cent of the Indian population are compulsorily unemployed for half the year; they can only be helped by reviving a trade that has fallen into oblivion and making it a source of new income.

Gandhi, in asserting this view, was firmly insisting that political and economic freedom must always be complementary if true democratic ideals are to be realised.

I do not myself agree with those who believe that freedom from economic want must first be guaranteed before political freedom can be addressed in earnest. In recent years Lee Kuan Yew, former Prime Minister of Singapore, has emerged as a persuasive exponent of the view that food, clothing and shelter are of far greater practical importance to the people than political freedom, and that these necessities must be provided before the realization of political freedom can be feasible. This is the launching pad from which Lee Kuan Yew has vigorously attacked Governor Chris Patten's policy for the future of Hong Kong. Chris Patten has placed far greater emphasis on the issue of civil rights in Hong Kong than his predecessors had done. Lee Kuan Yew has consistently faulted this policy on the ground that it would, in all probability, give rise to grave antagonisms with the People's Republic of China, with resulting irreparable detriment to the economic prosperity of Hong Kong.

I do not myself believe that the pursuit of economic and political freedom should be successive agendas. I believe, on the contrary, that they constitute related aspects of a concurrent and contemporaneous agenda. Far from being mutually antagonistic, they can be conceived of and applied in such a manner as to strengthen each other. I have no doubt that this should be the pivot of an enlightened policy for Asia. Gandhi's emphatic injunction strongly confirms this view.

The richness of India's cultural tradition is too great to receive encapsulation in the life or career of any individual, however distinguished. Few of India's greatest sons can legitimately aspire to this distinction, but Mahatma Gandhi comes pretty close to it. The relationship between Sri Lanka and India during the last decade has not been uniformly happy; it has been characterised by vicissitudes and upheavals of considerable magnitude. In the midst of these events, and the welter of emotions which they have produced, we have tended unwittingly to relegate the vast reservoir of shared values which bind our two countries together. It is these very values which permeate, at every point, the life and career of Shri Mohandas Gandhi. What I have tried to do here is to focus upon some facets of these values. It is my devout wish that our consciousness of the contemporary world and our ability to live in harmony in these troubled times with our fellow beings, with nature and above all with ourselves, will in some measure be facilitated by our understanding, however limited, of the immortal example of Mahatma Gandhi.

TOWARDS AN ACTIVE NON-VIOLENCE

Rajmohan Gandhi

We can begin by noting today's context for non-violence. The world's nuclear arsenal remains awesome, remains essentially in P 5 hands, and is capable of destroying life on our planet several times over. Nuclear testing continues. Question marks remain over the control and security of nuclear weapons based in independent countries emerging from the former Soviet Union. The Koreas and South Asia raise nuclear eyebrows and nuclear worries. Smaller weapons proliferate. They are deadlier, easier to obtain, easier to handle and cheaper than ever before. Produced competitively, distributed worldwide and sold energetically, they are also demanded in increasingly larger quantities, for ethnic hates have multiplied, intensified and found greater scope following the end of the cold war. Scapegoating has spread like drugs and Aids, and even drugs and Aids, and not just rising prices and falling jobs, are laid at the door of a targeted ethnic group. If tribe versus neighbouring tribe was mankind's first war, tribe versus neighbouring tribe also seems mankind's latest war, or the pattern of mankind's latest innumerable wars. True, tribe is sometimes given a more exalted name like race, nation or people; sometimes religion is invoked instead of or in addition to the bloodline; but the doctrine upholding each clash is the same: hate thy neighbour. Finally, our context also includes the unexpected, or in some cases the much feared, knock on the door by an arms-bearing delegation

at any time of day or night. The delegation may be of one or more; it may have a motive or none; it may pick on a door to knock by design or by accident. But it seems to turn up more frequently than before, and in more countries than earlier; and the round the clock possibility of a knock by an armed, anonymous autonomous visitor is as much a spectre today as the midnight knock of the state police was, or in many places still is.

This context makes the need for non-violence utterly obvious but its total attainment virtually impossible. The arguments for the right of defensive violence by an individual, a tribe, a race, a people and a nation are well-known and not easily dismissed. In essence they show that defensive violence may save the attacked in whole or in part, and may curb the attacker in whole or in part. The counters to this are also familiar: defensive violence may seem aggressive rather than defensive to the other side; and may lead to more violence or preparation for more violence on both sides. The acquisition of each new arm may seem a purely defensive step to one side, but the arms race furthered by each "defensive" step could in the end destroy both sides. The search for the control, scrutiny and reform of arms systems rather than for their immediate abolition provides common ground. How the world and its residents can cooperate to control, reform and scrutinize the great arms systems of nations is one end of the question of violence or non-violence. How a state and its citizens can cooperate to provide greater security and greater human rights to the citizen is the other end. The management of clashes between neighbouring groups occupies the middle ground.

Gandhi provided theoretical and practical arguments against violence and for non-violence; and he also bequeathed a tradition of active non-violence. He saw life as sacred and life as one. To kill was unholy and also partly suicidal. If all life was one, a bit of you was killed too if you killed another. Also, violence invoked the beast in the attacker and the attacked and was a regressive force in human history.

Again, a killer assumes the status of God rather than of man, ascribing to his stand a perfection that no human can claim and to his victim an irredeemability that no human can pronounce, for no human can see everything about another.

Moreover, argued Gandhi, "the means may be likened to a seed, the end to a tree; and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree." Violence will beget more of itself; non-

violence or love, likewise.

In practice, violence was objectionable "because, when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary, but the evil it does is permanent."

"Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred," added Gandhi. (*Harijan*, 7-7-46) That violence fuels new violence is observed reality. We can think of former Yugoslavia. There the surface and depth of violence spread in due obedience to the laws of retaliation, and it is early yet to say that the areas spared so far will not be engulfed.

A year before World War II Gandhi said: "One thing is certain. If the mad race for armaments continues it is bound to result in a slaughter such as never occurred in history. If there is a victor left the very victory will be a living death for the nation that emerges victorious." (*Harijan*, 12-11-38)

He saw a special role for India. "I feel in the inmost recesses of my heart that the world is sick unto death of blood-spilling. The world is seeking a way out, and I flatter myself with the belief that perhaps it will be the privilege of the ancient land of India to show that way out to the starving world."

He also thought that the sons and daughters of Africa, even if resident far from that continent, in the U.S.A. for example, might play a leading role: "Well, if it comes true, it may be through the Negroes that the unadulterated message of non-violence will be delivered to the world." (*Harijan*, 14-3-36)

Non-violence to Gandhi was "the law of suffering, the ancient law of self-sacrifice". It was "dynamic" and created "a more active and real fight against wickedness than retaliation". Active non-violence was satyagraha, which Gandhi at different times called the force of truth, the force of love or the force of the spirit. A *satyagrahi*, a fighter of satyagraha, "bids goodbye to fear". He has "the courage to face death without revenge", he is "never afraid to trust the opponent" and should have "no ill-will or hatred". He should think of violating a wrong law or order only after he has exhausted every avenue to "approach the constituted authority, appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion and state his case calmly and coolly before everybody."

So much for what Gandhi said. As to what he did, his adversaries, the leaders of the Raj, wrote in their diaries that it was Gandhi and the non-violent movement he led that had wrested independence from them. Other forces and factors were no doubt also in operation but in the independence movement

the centrality and dominance of Gandhi's role or the role of non-violence cannot be easily denied. The role of events such as the mutiny of the RIN ratings in February 1946 should be given due importance but not more than they warrant. Michael Brecher and Michael Edwardes were both in error in their biographies of Nehru when they suggested that the Cabinet Mission came to India in 1946 with an offer of independence because of the mutiny. Wavell records in his diary on January 24, 1946, more than three weeks before the mutiny, that he received a message about "a delegation of three Ministers to negotiate a settlement of the Indian problem". (Wavell, *A Viceroy's Journal*, p. 206) I refer to the mistake because it has been recycled elsewhere too.

There is no need to detail the familiar story of active non-violence as it unfolded in the freedom movement. But as instances of active non-violence mention may be made of Gandhi's 1932 fast from behind prison walls to prevent a constitutional division of the scheduled castes from the rest of the Hindu community; his 1946 campaign, for the safety of Hindus, in Muslim-majority Noakhali in what later became Bangladesh; his 1946 campaign in Bihar for the safety of Muslims, and his 1947 and 1948 fasts for Hindu-Muslim friendship. I mention these events because they were remarkable and even amazing examples of what heroic non-violence can achieve but also because their very heroism suggests that we who live in our humdrum, non-heroic age should look for humbler examples. Gandhi's fasts and his entry into fiery regions brought the temperature down because of his prestige earned through an exceptional lifetime of exceptional dedication. Leaps into the furnace by ordinary folk or fasts unto death by them are not only less likely to occur; even if they do, they are less likely to melt stony hearts. As Johan Galtung points out, "After all, 40,000 children die for lack of nutrition every day without sufficiently stirring sluggish consciences." (Johan Galtung, *The Way is the Goal: Gandhi Today*, 1992, p. 117) I do not dismiss, even for our times, the relevance of fasting or of daring steps against conflagrations, but we should look for ways in which the ordinary person can use active non-violence for worthwhile ends and also affect for the better the context noted earlier.

Since the heroic Gandhi was also a human Gandhi, we can find examples of human-sized rather than giant-sized non-violence in him as well. His presenting of sandals to the man who put him in prison, General Smuts, falls in this category. It would be a mistake, I think, to sneer at the effect of a step of this kind. It

helped turn Smuts into at least an intermittent ally; and on a recent visit to South Africa I found that the memory of that tiny gesture, or a reminder of it, steel serves as a little brick in the bridge of racial equality and partnership in South Africa, a bridge under attack. Then there was Gandhi's decision that his large army of *satyagrahis* in South Africa would postpone their march for racial rights because the government had a huge strike by white workers on its hands. In the same strain, and also effective in winning goodwill or undermining illwill, was the Indian decision in the 1940 individual *satyagraha* not to offer arrests on Christmas Day, and let British officials observe that day in their homes rather than on the streets or in police stations.

Many of those who invited death or imprisonment in the different rounds of India's independence movement were heroic; many were courageous even if not heroic. The tens of thousands who in 1930 broke the salt law and scooped up salt unlawfully, or sold or bought it unlawfully, were courageous persons who can be emulated even in our times. Mass *satyagraha* is not out of date though nowadays commitment to *satyagraha*'s rules is not perhaps a standard feature with everyone claiming to perform a *satyagraha*.

The historic successes with active non-violence that Martin Luther King Jr. and his associates and Albert Luthuli achieved in the late 1950s, appearing to vindicate Gandhi's words of 1936, and the history of their battles provide other rich sources for hope and also for lessons. The non-violent streams that are our legacy from the past have been admirably and in some cases powerfully replenished by men such as Nelson Mandela, F.W. De Klerk, Vaclav Havel and Lech Walesa. Everyone knows that the African National Congress, of which Mandela is now the president and of which he was always a symbol, had a military wing; and everyone knows that de Klerk presided over the Pretoria regime with all its armed and security wings. Yet their separate and joint roles towards the creation of a just, democratic, non-racial and peaceful South Africa fully entitle Mandela and de Klerk to a central place in any contemporary discussion of active non-violence. Their choice in recent years of a non-violent approach for a solution of South Africa's conflicts stands out for its sanity in the context summarised at the start of this article.

Then there is the remarkable and long-sustained example of active non-violence of the Dalai Lama and large numbers of his Tibetan people. Even if some of their goals have not been

realized, they have preserved and presented to the world Tibetan identity, Tibetan culture and the Tibetan way of life. By contrast, the violence of groups such as the LTTE has if anything shrouded in smoke and blood the identity of the people in whose name arms were resorted to.

I would argue that active non-violence should be seen not only as a sane way of conducting a conflict, the way of satyagraha rather than of bloodshed, not only as an exercise towards disarmament, though a reduction in armaments is undoubtedly a crucial aspect of non-violence but also as a way of reducing conflicts. What Gandhi wrote in *Harijan* almost as soon as India became free and became two is relevant:

India is now free, and the reality is now clearly revealed to me. Now that the burden of subjection has been lifted, all the forces of goodwill have to be marshalled in one great effort to build a country which forsakes the accustomed method of violence in order to settle human conflicts, whether it is between two states or between two sections of the same people. I have yet the faith that India would rise to the occasion and prove to the world that the birth of two new states would not be a menace but a blessing to the rest of mankind. (*Harijan*, 31-8-47)

Now that India and Pakistan are free, he is saying, let each resolve its internal conflicts non-violently or peacefully, and let the two resolve their mutual conflicts peacefully. (Let me add that the Shimla Pact of 1973 embodied the later half of the statement.) And let all the forces of good be marshalled for the great objective of peaceful conflict resolution. Note that Gandhi is not asking for immediate disarmament, unilateral or bilateral. Ever aware that the desirable and the feasible did not always converge, he had even agreed, as everyone knows, to the use of the Indian army to defend Jammu and Kashmir after it had been attacked in October 1947. He who had asked the British to face Hitler unarmed and the Jews to do likewise did not ask Nehru, Patel, Sheikh Abdullah and the Indian Army to do likewise. The prophet of non-violence was also a counsellor of the Indian state and Gandhi knew, as he wrote in 1926, that he had "to have a tough hide". Gandhi had always said that while violence was superior to cowardice, non-violence was superior to violence. But the choice in Kashmir was not between cowardice and violence; it was between defending Kashmir or letting it be taken by force, and Gandhi, whose advice the Government of India continued on occasion (but only on occasion) to seek, could not recommend that rulers and soldiers

should look the other way.

To return to the statement I have quoted, it shows a noteworthy, but in Gandhi's case not surprising, attachment to both "the new states"—to both India and Pakistan. The partition on the map had wounded him but his heart remained unpartitioned. He will bother about both new nations. Indeed, he expressed a desire to live in Pakistan. (WME-89, p. 307) Let us note, too, that even while expressing the faith that the two nations would prove a blessing to the rest of mankind, he does not rule out the possibility of their becoming a menace to it.

Get together and sort things out, he was saying. That would be active non-violence. "Listen to one another," he seems to be saying. "Recognise that your stand may not be wholly right, nor your adversary's wholly wrong. Between ethnic groups, between neighbouring nations, honourable compromise may be the only way." It is a form of active non-violence in which statesmen and citizens all may have a part. The different ways in which they can play their part is a whole subject in itself.

Sixteen years earlier, when partition was not yet thought of by the Muslim League, Gandhi had described in a few terse sentences the India he was striving for:

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India where all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women shall enjoy the same rights as men. Since we shall be at peace with the rest of the world, we should have the smallest army imaginable. All interests not in conflict with the interests of the dumb millions will be scrupulously respected, whether indigenous or foreign. (*Young India*, 10-9-31)

That this remained his vision until the last is confirmed by what he said sixteen days before his assassination:

In an India where "democracy (was) established," he said, "we would regard the humblest and the lowliest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land. (There the citizen) will observe no distinctions between caste and caste, between touchable and untouchable, but will consider everyone equal with himself...He would treat the labourers the same as he would the capitalists. He will, like the millions of toilers, earn his living from the service of others and will make no distinction between intellectual

and manual work...He will never touch opium, liquor or any intoxicants...He will concede to woman the same rights he claims for himself. (CWMG, Vol. 90, p. 420).

As summaries of a vision for India or South Asia as a whole, these two statements, one made in 1931 and the other in 1948, cannot be easily improved in comprehensiveness or relevance for our times. They spell out an agenda for active non-violence.

I suggest that only active non-violence can build the India that Gandhi described, and only such an India, or South Asia, would foster non-violence. Non-violence and the desired India are each other's cause and each other's effect. They strengthen each other.

In India and South Asia today, our distance from the ideal is bitingly plain. Our minds, whether we are rulers or citizens, are partitioning and shrinking, and we seem to evoke one another's angrier, shriller side rather than their confident, generous side. Yet we know, even from recent electoral experience, that at times the poor find an effective voice in India. It is also true that struggles are being waged for the abolition of untouchability, the removal of high and low, for equal rights for women, for the rights of the dumb, against intoxicants, for communal harmony and for a state that serves the citizen. South Asia's armies, however, are not the smallest imaginable, and as a region, South Asia is yet to find stability and trust. South Africa is in as crucial a state, with a similar mix of potential, achievement and hurdles. Gandhi's description of the India he was working for can perhaps help, *mutatis mutandis*, with an emphasis on racial rather than religious partnership, in clarifying our hopes for South Africa as well.

Before ending, let me offer another Gandhi quote from something he wrote in May 1946, when, as previously pointed out, India meant the sum of what today is India, Pakistan and Bangladesh:

On India rests the burden of pointing the way to all the exploited races. She won't be able to bear that burden today if non-violence does not permeate us more than today...India will become a torch-bearer to the oppressed and exploited races only if she can vindicate the principles of non-violence in her own case, not jettison it as soon as independence from foreign control is achieved. (*Harijan*, 19-5-46)

Even in his lifetime Indians were often impatient with Gandhi and his non-violence. Today, in the context noted at the

start and the angrier climate to which reference has been made, they seem less inclined than before to listen to him, whereas one of his principal colleagues, Vallabhbhai Patel, has gained in popular respect. I should do well, therefore, to recall one of the Sardar's observations. "We take a short-range view," said Patel, "while he (Gandhi) takes the long-range one." (*Hindustan Times*, 17-1-48)

I may be forgiven for closing with a basic thought and a crucial question. The gun, the knife, the bomb, even the atom bomb, are in the final analysis vehicles of violence, its temporary homes. Violence's true home, its nursery where it feeds and grows and where active non-violence should perhaps above all focus, is the human heart with its hurts and angers, its fears and greeds.

□

GANDHI'S DISCIPLES IN EUROPE

Matthias Reichl

Gandhi was asked in June 1947, "How can you account for the growing violence among your people on the part of political parties for the furtherance of political ends? Is this the result of the thirty years of non-violent practice for ending British rule? Does your message of non-violence still hold good for the world?" He replied in his weekly paper, *The Harijan*, that the non-violence that had been offered during the previous thirty years had been non-violence of the weak, and that India had not really practised the non-violence of the strong. There was no hope, he said, for the aching world except through the narrow and straight path of non-violence. "Millions like me may fail to prove the truth in their own lives, that would be their failure, never that of the eternal law."

Gandhi's testament to his disciples and to all those striving for active non-violence was not to adore him as a guru, but to accept him as an inspirer for decentralized communities and movements.

Gandhi's commemoration—and also that of his follower Vinoba Bhave's 100th birthday in 1995—should respect their message and life. Some academic intellectuals, oriented on "western cultural traditions" and groups headed by them, are too often based in centralized structures and big cities. Their attitudes to exploit the "underdeveloped", marginalized peoples living in the "deep province" are themselves supporting oppressive structures, but do not strengthen efforts to transform them into living ones. Ethnological research on exotic objects instead of ethically-

based solidarity with subjects is one of these attitudes—with tragic consequences.

Political analysts interpreted the assassination of Gandhi and the continuing violent conflicts, caused by political, nationalistic and religious fanaticism, as a defeat of his concept. The non-violent changes in Eastern Europe from 1989 onwards and the expectations after the breakdown of the communist dictatorship raised the hope, of an alternative way oriented on the basis of Gandhian socialism and similar concepts. Politics could leave the power-play tactics of the cold-war period towards an “active non-violence of the strong”. But what has happened is just the opposite. Ethnocide, accompanied by the destruction of multi-cultural and multi-religious communities (in the Balkans as well as long before in other non-European regions) gave militarily oriented politicians arguments to criticize Gandhian principles as “dangerous naivete”.

“You cannot build non-violence on a factory civilization, but it can be built on self-contained villages.” M. K. Gandhi in *Harijan* (4-11-39). His critique of the industrialization of life and the domination by a worldwide circle of materialistic goods is clear (*Harijan*, 28-7-46): “Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the village, the latter ready to perish for the circle of villages, till at last the whole becomes one life composed of individuals, never aggressive in their arrogance but ever humble, sharing the majesty of the oceanic circle of which they are integral units... In this there is no room for machines that would displace human labor and that would concentrate power in a few hands. Labour has its unique place in a cultured human family. Every machine that helps every individual has a place...”

Lanza del Vasto, a French philosopher, writer and artist marched to India searching for the sources of non-violence by discovering Gandhi's way to initiate and develop communities. He went back to Europe as “Shantidas” (servant of peace) and started to gather friends in the Larzac region in southern France for an Ashram-like “Ark-Community” as a “Laboratory for a non-violent living and politics”.

With this thought, far away from simplistic scepticism, Shantidas had much in common with Vinoba Bhave. From his second pilgrimage to India in 1954 they co-operated in the development of communities, mainly in poor, marginalized regions. They are also knots in a net for social care, health care

with natural medicine (Ayurveda, diagnosis and therapy based on traditional methods...) Some of their common aims are: the Satyagraha-resistance against various violent threats, to survive in living communities and to develop the knowledge of old and new ethical principles of life.

But can these values of deep-rooted communities be defended against the clever strategies of mass-manipulation by media, consumerism, political and religious sects and other tactics? How to start a dialogue in Gandhi's spirit with anonymous powers? How to change the usual political and economical negotiations in the GATT, European Union, the UN and other dominating organizations into a dialogue without winners and losers? Is a violent mass-protest and guerilla-actions a logical consequence of the lack of positive human relations?

Similar to the Gandhian movement in India networks appeared also in Europe (in France for example the "reseaux esperance"). And the debate on alternative visions and laboratories in Europe and worldwide went on in the British journal "Resurgence" (with the participation of Vinoba Bhave, Leopold Kohr, E. F. Schumacher and others). Political alphabetization to rediscover their authentical language-culture is organized—not only for poor illiterates—in basic communities by the Brazilian pedagogian Paulo Freire.

Many of these grass roots movements faced—and still face—a lot of political, social and also financial problems. So Jakob von Uexkull sponsored and organized from 1980 on an annual "Right Livelihood Award". One of his main aims is to honour them, ignored by the "Nobel-Prize-committee", because of their unconventional and oppositional initiatives with a so-called "Alternative Nobel Prize" and to provide them publicity. I cite some of the laureates:

One of the laureates of 1993 is Vandana Shiva, an ecological activist at the Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Natural Resource Policy in Dehradun, India. She states in 1991 (in "The Feature of Progress", pp. 47, 52). "Indigenous knowledge and social systems had ensured the protection of nature by treating vital natural resources as sacred and as held in common. Western reductionist science emerged as a perfect instrument to remove the barriers of sanctity whilst Western market economies were emerging to transform nature's commons into market commodities... While Third World ecology movements focus on people's rights, global prescriptions focus on international markets as a solution to the

environmental crisis."

As a consequence of the struggle of indigenous peoples all over the world to protect their "Mother Earth" also many western human rights activists, like the Austrian "future-activist" Robert Jungk, demand "to give the land back to those willing and able to use and respect it." And Jose Lutzenberger, former minister for environment in Brazil, encouraged in October '93 five hundred thousand Indian farmers on their manifestation in Bangalore to seek alternatives for an agriculture endangered by genetic-engineering, the "Green Revolution", GATT-trade-agreements. He trains worldwide alternative biological farming in combination between traditional regional methods and new insights in a holistic conception to use nature without destroying it. His philosophy of "Mother Earth" as a living body is deeply rooted in Gandhian and Buddhist philosophy.

Leopold Kohr, laureate in 1983, who recently died at the age of 85 denounced the propaganda in the post-modern society on the "breakdown of visions". Instead of this he warned about "the breakdown of over-developed nations" (not only in Eastern Europe but also in the Western hemisphere). "The victory of the western materialistic model is suggesting that there is no 'Third Way' between the state and the free market capitalism." He illustrated his philosophy of the "human size" by a modified Shakespearean phrase: "To be small or not to be, that's the question!", popularized by E.F.Schumacher with "small is beautiful". Jakob von Uexkull and other activists are busy to develop socially acceptable solutions within the emerging crisis and discover a new political role for a reactivated opposition in Eastern and Western Europe. □

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THE LEGACY OF GANDHI

Lord Attenborough

The legacy of Mahatma Gandhi is not only vested in the independence of India and her position as one of the world's great democracies. His abiding greatness lies in the fact that the whole world needs Gandhian philosophy as much today as it did during his lifetime. There is no conflict—be it concerned with religion or race, domination or greed—in which his precepts are any less relevant, any less powerful now than they were during his lifetime. When we look around us in our everyday lives, when we watch terrible events in far away places through the medium of television, we may be tempted to say how sad it is that nothing has changed. But if human nature remains the same, then Gandhiji's Truth remains the same. And in that truth lies hope for us all tomorrow. □

THE LEGACY OF GANDHI

Daniel Patrick Moynihan

It is difficult to capture the profound impact that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had on our world. His is still a household name admired some 125 years after his birth. A name which calls up inspiring images of a single man dressed in hand-spun cloth, leading a nation to independence. The effects of his non-violent actions were not limited to his country, nor his time. Leaders of today continue to study his life and adopt aspects of his thought.

If I may invade ever so slightly the privacy of the President's luncheon table, in May, 1994, Mr. Clinton had as his guest the distinguished Prime Minister of India, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, who in his youth was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi. In a graceful passage, the P.M. related how it came to pass that Mahatma Gandhi, caught up in the struggle for fair treatment to the Indian community in South Africa, and in consequence in jail read Thoreau's essay on "Civil Disobedience" which confirmed his view that an honest man is duty-bound to violate unjust laws. He took this view home with him, and in the end the British *raj* gave way to an independent Republic of India. Then Martin Luther King, Jr. repatriated the idea and so began the great civil rights movement of this century. A movement even so, still far from fulfilment.

It is no fluke that in 1994, when the heads of two democracies governing over one-fifth of the world lunch, that Mahatma Gandhi should be a topic of conversation. Even as we pause on the threshold of a new millennium, we recall how his legacy shaped us and how it will be carried into the future. □

GANDHI'S RELEVANCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOUTHERN AFRICA

Yash Tandon

The world has changed since Gandhi. The cold war has come and gone, Gandhi had only a sense of its beginning. The colonised world has become independent, Gandhi had witnessed only India's independence and the trauma of partition. Communism was there during Gandhi's time, but that has gone too, and left behind a monopolar world. New movements have emerged since Gandhi's time. The feminist movement has introduced a new dimension at all levels of social and political life—domestic, national and international; it has even changed the language of common discourse. The environmental movement has emerged assertive and has raised fundamental issues regarding the relationship between human beings and nature. The human rights movement has reached a new plateau with the Vienna Congress, and has become a major excuse for great power intervention in the affairs of smaller ones. Developmentalism as a movement was there during Gandhi's time, Gandhi was one of few who had questioned about its pertinence; now "development" is no longer a secure god.

But Gandhi was deeper than passing events. To be sure, as an activist, he wrestled with all existing social and political issues of the day, but all the time he tried to grapple with the subterranean

forces influencing those issues—forces of racism and human prejudice, of greed and arrogance, of authority and resistance; forces of violence and terrorism, of love and abstinence; and above all, as he would say, the force of “truth” and satyagraha. He was a profound thinker and activist, one who did not separate theory from practice, life from reality, and reality from vision. Therefore, to try to evaluate Gandhi’s “relevance” at this time, or any, must induce a sense of modesty at the daunting task. But Gandhi’s 125th anniversary provides us an excellent opportunity to look into ourselves with Gandhian lenses and see how we have fallen short of the ideals that he set for himself and for humanity.

Gandhi and the Role of Violence in the Liberation Struggle

For Southern Africa the question of violence must be the starting point. It is also the most controversial. Gandhi’s influence on the movement to liberate Southern Africa was profound. For nearly four decades after its founding, and against great odds, the African National Congress (ANC), the leading liberation movement in the region, persevered with the methods of non-violence left by the legacy of Gandhi’s earlier struggles in South Africa. It was a powerful legacy and it could not be easily renounced. Chief Albert Luthuli, ANC’s President and Nobel Peace Prize winner, came from the powerful Zulu warrior tradition, but under the influence of Gandhi’s teachings he had opted for non-violence. It was not until late 1950s that the ANC finally abandoned the non-violent approach and opted for the armed struggle. It was argued that violence was the only language that the Boer regime understood. On 21 March, 1960 at Sharpeville the South African police mowed down 69 passive demonstrators. It provided a sharp lesson, and a turning point. The non-violent approach seemed to have met its nemesis. The same was true for the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique, the British colony of Rhodesia, and the U.N. trust territory of Namibia which was under South African control. There, too, the liberation movements reluctantly abandoned the peaceful and constitutional means and opted for guerrilla struggle. The teachings of Mao supplanted those of Gandhi.

To what extent the final defeat of colonial and racist forces in Southern Africa was an outcome of the armed struggle, and to what extent a result of other forces will always remain a controversial subject. The answer depends to some extent on one’s ideological preferences; the subjective element cannot be ruled out. At the

end of this particular debate, however, those putting their weight behind armed struggle would concede that the guerrillas would not have succeeded without the support of millions of peasants in Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia who undermined the colonial regimes by a thousand different ways outside of the military action. Equally, those espousing non-violence might have to concede the decisive role that the guerrillas played in the final victory, especially in its timing. A solely non-violent approach, if it were to have succeeded, would for sure have taken a much longer time.

In the case of South Africa itself, however, the evidence appears to tilt, ironically perhaps but significantly, in favour of the effectiveness of the non-violent approach as against armed action. This conclusion may surprise those nurtured in the glorification of "armed struggle". But the conclusion can be substantiated. For 15 years after Sharpeville, the major liberation movements (the ANC and the Pan-African Congress) externalised themselves or went underground, many of their leaders incarcerated. In effect, they quit the field. Even their leadership would admit that those were the dark days of the movement. When active resistance was resumed in 1976, the initial leadership came from an unexpected quarter, from militant students. They were a new generation altogether, had probably never heard of Gandhi, and certainly not of the methods of "satyagraha". If asked they would have probably opted for a violent overthrow of the regime. But they knew its risks. On the terrain of violence, the regime was better prepared and equipped, and far more ruthless, than they could be. They did not have the resources or the organisation to launch armed struggle internally. And so their strategy, by force of circumstance rather than of ideology, was to cripple the state and the economy through active civil resistance, sometimes in ways that Gandhi would probably not have approved, but on the whole based on civil action rather than military, which Gandhi would have joined with characteristic vigour and discipline. They were soon joined by industrial workers who were silently organising themselves and struggling at the shopfloor level all these years and who now began a series of crippling strikes.¹ And the third wing (besides the students and the workers) were the other organs of civil society (religious bodies, women's and youth movements, and street committees which organised struggles over rent, consumer embargoes and bus boycotts) which finally culminated in a loose structure called the United Democratic Front (UDF).

All these currents of active resistance were certainly not self-consciously Gandhian. Indeed, even many of those in the leadership of the Natal Indian Congress, first formed by Gandhi in 1894, had distanced themselves from Gandhi long time ago, and were now underground operators of either the Communist Party or the ANC, supporting, in theory at least, the ideology of the armed struggle. In practice, however, they found the method of active civil resistance more relevant to the conditions then pertaining. The strength of an idea, in this case that of active non-violence, lies not in its author, but in its relevance and effectiveness. And this is the point about the resistance against the South African state and system between Sharpeville and the release of Mandela—it was conducted, by and large, by methods which Gandhi would have generally approved, i.e. by methods of active civil resistance. The armed struggle by the major liberation movements had become a secondary factor. Indeed, armed guerrilla struggle quickly became no more than acts of “armed propaganda”, which took the form of occasional and spasmodic blowing up of “strategic” sites within South Africa, more for psychological impact internally and diplomatic effect externally than for real strategic gain or economic sabotage. These had their function, for sure, but their importance has been vastly exaggerated in the liberation literature. It is part of myth-building in which every society indulges—the noble hero bearing weapons returns home victorious. The true liberators of South Africa, however, are the millions—men, women and children—who fought inside South Africa, in factories and farms, in schools and colleges, in shanty-towns and street committees. They fought by means which would have made Gandhi proud.

Violence in the Post-liberation Struggle

Gandhi or no Gandhi, violence remains a major factor in the political equation in Southern Africa. There are at least three kinds of violence. One is *state violence*, the regulation of society by the monopoly of coercion that the state possesses. This is exercised against all those who are considered a “threat” to the state or the economy. This was, and still remains, the major form of violence in South Africa, less pronounced in other independent countries of the region. The second is *political violence* resorted to by parties seeking either to take over state power or to secure a better bargain in the dispensation of state power. In Southern

Africa this takes more of an ethnic or regional character rather than religious, as it does in some other parts of Africa. In Angola and Mozambique this has resulted in a continuous civil war for nearly 20 years now (ever since their independence from colonial rule in 1975), and has taken an extremely heavy toll of limb and life as well as of property and economic infrastructure. In Zimbabwe, the early years after independence was marked by violent ethnic and regional conflict now sublimated as a result of a political compromise between the two major political parties. The third is *economic violence* that can fairly be laid at the foot of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank whose Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) and market-oriented strategies are causing unprecedented rise in unemployment, social misery and general poverty among the ordinary people. In Zimbabwe, for example, as the per capita expenditure on health has fallen from Z\$ 18 in 1990 to Z\$ 16 in 1991, the incidence of maternal death has increased from 190 to 242 within one year.² Of what relevance are the teachings of Gandhi to the issues of post-liberation violence?

State Violence and the Gandhian Dilemma

First let us discuss the question of state violence. This is an area where Gandhi, in my opinion, skirts the issue rather than face it squarely, and hence he does not come out with a clear answer to help those who have to deal with the state. "The state," Gandhi reflects correctly, "represents violence in a concentrated and organised form. The individual has a soul, but as the state is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its very existence."³ Should then, the question arises, one assume state power or not? Gandhi's own solution to this problem was not to take over state power when he had that opportunity after India became independent. He chose to remain outside of the state. But that was a personal solution to a difficult problem. If his path was taken by other leaders of the Congress, the new state of India would have been abandoned to possibly a group of thugs.

The Gandhian dilemma (to take or not to take state power) did not confront the leaders of the liberation movements in Southern Africa (outside of South Africa) because, really, they fought to get into state power. Theirs, it is now evident after more than a decade of independence, was, however, an illusion—an illusion into

thinking that they could tame, civilize the state, especially, in the case of Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, on the grounds that they were armed with the theory of Marxism-Leninism. The state was evil only as long as it was capitalist, they reasoned, but if it was to be used on behalf of the masses in order to socialise the means of production, then they would be exercising the power of the state for general good. Now we know, for better or for worse, that they were building their hopes on a fantasy. They had not counted on the hostility of western countries and of South Africa against the self-proclaimed "socialist" regimes, and the ferocity with which they would try to disorganise such regimes. In the case of Angola and Mozambique, they eventually succeeded in thoroughly destabilising them, and in the case of Zimbabwe nearly so. The end result is that all those in power have now abandoned their Marxist proclivities and have fallen in line to being loyal members of the capitalist road to development. All of them now exercise what Gandhi calls state "violence in a concentrated and organised form" to hold the populations down at the behest of the World Bank and the IMF.

If the Gandhian dilemma did not exercise the minds of the leaders of Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and, more recently, of Namibia, it is at least an issue with some of the leaders of the liberation movements in South Africa. The question is whether or not to take state power, and be in a position to exercise its monopoly of force. Does the state offer a means to rectify the historical ills of *apartheid*, or will it inevitably become an instrument of coercive power over the dispossessed majority at the behest of international finance capital? At the time of writing these lines, this is a hotly debated issue among a section of the reflective and sensitive leadership. A majority of the leadership in the "tripartite alliance" (between the ANC, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party) argue that this is their opportunity to get into the new post-apartheid state in order to change around the situation; indeed, not to be there would be an act of irresponsibility, of reckless self-abnegation. It is reminiscent of what Nehru, for example, might have said on the eve of India's independence. On this basis, even the workers' movement, COSATU, has nominated 20 of its "best leaders" onto the ANC Parliamentary list so as to get into state power.

However, there is a minority who hold the view that they must not get into the state. They have, if you like, taken the Gandhian option. They argue that they must stay within the realm

of the civil society in order to continue to offer resistance to the state should the latter betray the will of the majority. At the Special Congress of COSATU held in September, 1993 at which its 20 members were elected to stand for the Parliament, there was considerable trepidation about sending their best into the state. The newly elected General Secretary, Sam Shilowa, expressed the dilemma of the workers when he said the Union would have to "take to the streets" if and when ANC "moves out of the line with us."⁴ Of course, there are many within the large number of civil society organisations in South Africa (at local, provincial and national levels) who are deliberately keeping out of state power "in order to be with the people". There is also specifically the Azania People's Organisation (AZAPO) which is boycotting the April, 1994 elections on the grounds, among others, that independence will not bring power into the hands of the people, and that the state will only change its colour and not its policies as far as the masses of the people are concerned. Whilst, of course, not influenced by Gandhian thinking (at least not directly), they have taken the Gandhian option of not getting into state power in order to continue to stay with the people.

The Gandhian Answer to Political Violence

Political violence is the bane of African politics, from Algeria to Nigeria, and Zaire to South Africa. But not just African. It is a familiar phenomenon to Sri Lanka and India, to Peru and Brazil, to the small island states of Haiti and Fiji, and to the European nations of Serbia and Bosnia. Very few countries are totally free from political violence. Even in the "democratic" United States they assassinate their presidents from time to time, and latent violence lies under the surface all the time, ready to burst at the first signs of racial provocation or economic distress. For the third world countries, political violence stems primarily from the lack of national cohesion, itself embedded in the material reality of poverty and external domination, and from the lack of political tolerance. But notwithstanding these apparently "scientific" explanations, political violence is a complex, irrational, phenomenon.

The strength of Gandhi's theory of non-violence is that he does not set out to offer any global explanation for political violence, in the manner of some universalising theory such as Marxism or functionalism or fundamentalism try to do. He recognises its reality. And the reality changes from place to place, and from

time to time. You deal with the situation as it arises. The reasons for political violence are not the same between Zimbabwe (for example) and Nicaragua or Bosnia, nor indeed are they the same for Zimbabwe in 1994 as they were for when it was Rhodesia in 1978. The problem is not with the "cause" of violence (for, indeed, where is there a conflict-free society?), but with the manner in which the conflict might be resolved.

It is a question of ends and means, Gandhi would say, and the need to separate the action from its perpetrator. No matter how worthy the end, it cannot, according to Gandhi, justify a resort to violence. The means have to justify themselves by some higher code of ethics and humanity; a worthy end does not justify, does not whitewash, evil means:

They say 'means are after all means'. I would say 'means are after all everything'. As the means so the end. There is no wall of separation between means and end... Realization of the goal is in exact proportion to that of the means. This is a proposition that admits of no exception.⁵

Gandhi's almost uncompromising stand on this issue has, of course, provoked considerable discussion over the years, even when he was alive. His detractors were constantly trying to put him into a corner: what if you are attacked by a robber, would you not resort to violence in self-defence? What if your country is about to be attacked by external forces, would you sit back and let it be subdued? Gandhi usually managed to get out of these kinds of problems with the dexterity and subtlety of a dialectician, not, one might add, always successfully. Every theory has internal contradictions, and Gandhi never claimed his was free from these. But if the logic of Gandhi's position is not to be pushed to its limits, it is clear what he was aiming at. Violence, any kind of violence, was anathema to him. The worst was oppressive violence, that is, violence aimed at oppressing others, or at denying others their humanity and freedom. But even violence to get out of oppressive conditions was self-defeating, for violence generates further violence; it has to be negated, sublimated, not provoked. And, above all, violence to secure state power or to hold on to power was, of course, totally unjustified, no matter how you embellish your quest for power with good intentions.

The wisdom of this principle cannot be lost to any casual observer of the African scene, traumatised by so much political violence. If only Mobutu Sese Seko, to just give one example, were to learn and accept the wisdom of this principle, one might

wistfully say, how much pain and suffering would it save the people of Zaire. The same goes for those in contemporary South Africa who seize on to violence at the smallest provocation. Gandhi's other principle in relation to political violence was to separate the action from the doer, one in which the task of political action is to remove the disease but to save the patient. You do not kill the person, you deal with the issues that create political disharmony.

But, and here is where the problem lies with much of Gandhi's teachings, how do you translate wise principles into institutions of governance? Gandhi left too much on the individual. It is the individual who must make the sacrifices, who must follow the "correct road" to *nirvana*, and who must discipline himself or herself to do the right thing at the right time. Gandhi did not provide any institutional solution to such problems of governance. Even when he believed in democracy, he left it to the individual to secure it:

In democracy, the individual will be governed and limited by the social will which is the State, which is governed by and for democracy. If everybody takes the law into his own hands, there is no State, it becomes anarchy, i.e., absence of social law or State. That way lies destruction of liberty. Therefore, you should subdue your anger and let the State secure justice.⁶

Outside of individual redemption Gandhi does not provide for checks and balances of the kind, for example, provided for in the western system of "representative" democracy, and the doctrine of the separation of powers between the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. Gandhi did have strong views of "village governance" (based on the Indian traditional system of "Panchayat"), but when it came to governance at the national level, he did not have any alternative system to that bequeathed by the British. Hence, you cannot turn to the pages of Gandhi's voluminous writings, nor to his own highly individualised political practice, to get *institutional* answers to the perpetual problems of political violence in modern states.

Economic Violence and the Return to Gandhi

Gandhi perfectly well understood the evils of capitalism as well as of communism, neither of which had much appeal for him. He was at pains, however, to make a distinction between capital and capitalism (he had no problem with "capital" as such), and between socialism and communism (he had no problem with

“socialism” as he defined it). Above all, he was most lethal in his critique of “industrialism” which both Soviet Communism as well as western capitalism advocated. With deep insight into the workings of industrialism, he wrote:

Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be the curse of mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and of absence of competitors....⁷

In this, Gandhi was not only insightful but also, one might say, prophetic. In his day, however, except for a small coterie of close followers, he was mostly ridiculed for advocating what appeared to be “a move backward in history”. Even Pandit Nehru, Gandhi’s apostle in other ways, and the first Prime Minister of India, had fundamental disagreement with Gandhi on this issue. “It is science and technology,” Nehru was fond of saying over and over again, “which has made Western countries wealthy and prosperous, and it is only through the growth of technology that India shall become a wealthy and prosperous nation.” Nehru had much faith in modern technology, Gandhi none. Nehru wanted to emulate the prosperous West, for Gandhi, “God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the west. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.”⁸

Gandhi was right. In the late 1960s, the Club of Rome produced the path-breaking study on the “limits to growth”, warning that the world was fast consuming the very wherewithal of its future survival. It shocked an incredulous world. But incredulity was followed by an ostrich attitude, until almost 30 years later the Brundlandt Commission reiterated the theme, and warned of dire consequences facing the world if it refused to mend its ways of wanton consumption and ecocidal destruction. A new concept has since then entered the lexicon of development economics—“sustainable development”. Once again, it would seem, and despite Rio, the world is burying its head into the sand as quickly as possible. Today, the difference, however, is that there are many more people than 30 years ago who are prepared to sit up and take notice. And many of them are dusting off the forgotten writings of Gandhi against industrialism, and his tracts on village economics and simple living. Gandhi has suddenly become relevant again for a world that still does not know how to stop what appears like hurtling towards the doom scenario.

If Gandhi has become, once again, relevant on the issue of

the management of global economics and ecology, what of it as far as Southern Africa is concerned? The tragedy is that relevance is not the same as realisation, especially when millions have for centuries been deprived of their land, forests, rivers, fish, flora and fauna. People in Southern Africa (as indeed in the rest of the deprived Third World) want "development". They want what the whites have had for a century and more. And they look upon the state to provide of what they have been so far deprived. In Zimbabwe, for example, the Indigenous Business Development Corporation demands of the state that it actively intervenes to create conditions for taking over the country's economy so that they too can be rich capitalists—just like the whites. In South Africa, with the impending demise of the *apartheid* regime and the advent of black rule, finally and after so much sacrifice, the expectations of people for jobs, proper education, adequate housing, medical care, and, above all, for land, is sky-rocketing, and no politician worth his or her mettle dare tell the people that this, for most of them, is an illusion, that in nearby Zimbabwe and Zambia, matters have taken a turn for the worse, and that under the regime of the World Bank and the IMF, these aspirations for a better material life are likely to remain unfulfilled for the bulk of the population. There is no Gandhian figure in the political landscape of Southern Africa to advise people against the dangers of emulating the West; most of the leaders are cast, at best, in the Nehru mould.

Conclusion

The Mahatma was a great man, a saint. He had a vision (although he was modest enough to deny being a visionary)⁹ of a largely self-regulated society of caring individuals who would live by the principles of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and simple life based on the production of goods for consumption and not for exchange. Who dares say that such a vision is "irrelevant" to our contemporary civilization—a world full of violence, hate, racism, and greed; a world of global *apartheid* where 20 per cent of the world's population enjoy unprecedented material opulence through exploiting the resources of the remaining 80 per cent, where the world is fast dividing itself into economic blocks intensifying international competition for markets and resources, and where the Americans daily threaten to invoke Super 301 sanctions against Japan for not opening up its markets to American products; a

civilization where knowingly (since the Brundlandt Commission Study) the world is committing ecocide and with it the death of all that is human and beautiful.

Of course, Gandhi's vision is relevant. More than perhaps even he might have realised, since he is not a witness to the state of the world as it is towards the turn of the century. Not only is Gandhi's vision relevant, but also his method of realizing that vision. Who would doubt the wisdom of separating the action from the actor, to deal with the disease but save the patient? Who would doubt the wisdom of not justifying violence for the sake of taking over or holding on to state power? To be sure, Gandhi did not provide *institutional* answers to the perpetual problem of political violence, but he would say that institutions are built by people, and it is with people that we must first begin the political process.

Gandhi showed us both the destination (a world of millions of self-regulating villages), and the way towards it (Satyagraha). He himself lived by what he preached, a public life open to foe and friend alike, never blaming any individual but the system, fighting the evils of the system whilst also transforming the individuals caught up in the system. Of course, if you looked to Gandhi for ready-made solutions, or for "models" of economics or of conflict management, you shall have looked in vain, for there are no models and no mechanical solutions to problems. The solutions lie in the spirit of the human beings—the spirit of trust, of tolerance, of resistance to oppression and violence, of faith in "truth" which for him was another name for God, of inner purity. His faith in the human being was supreme. "I have discovered that man is superior to the system he propounds."¹⁰ That faith in human beings is eternally relevant, for without it the political and economic system that the present civilization has created will surely, like the monster Frankenstein, devour us all.

□

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6. Prabhu and Rao, *op. cit.*, p. 338.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
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9. "I deny being a visionary. I do not accept the claim of saintliness. I am of the earth, earthly..." *Ibid*, p. 20.
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OUR GANDHI

Victor Ivbulis

One wonders if it is well known in India that the small Latvian nation since the middle of the 19th century has developed a particular interest and even love for the people who lived on the shores of the Ganges and whom Latvian press and some prominent figures used to call “brothers”.

The Latvians then were under a double yoke—that of the German feudals and the Russian tzars and were oppressed by both. Suddenly our intellectuals found out that there exists a great civilization to which we were related: William Jones’ great linguistic discovery in the 1780s that Sanskrit had a common origin with most European languages and the view of well-known German scholars that the Lithuanian and Latvian languages in this connection were of special significance, were received in Latvia as liberating news, as a factor enhancing our self-esteem.

Regrettably, the matter became only a point of widely discussed reference in talks and writing without inducing anybody to take up seriously the study of Sanskrit. Until now we don’t have anyone who would be a good judge in comparative study of Sanskrit and Latvian. Yet undeniably the conviction that the Indians in some mysterious way are closely related to the Latvians survives even today.

This belief became one of the most important factors behind the unusual and lasting fame of Rabindranath Tagore here. In the late 1920s and 1930s when elsewhere in Europe his books often disappeared from sale in Latvian were published well introduced

and commented on the poet's "Collected Works" in translation from English by Karlis Egle and Rihards Rudzitis, who themselves were highly respected people and believers in the special relationship of the Latvians with the Indians. Rabindranath Tagore in those years and until 1940 (when Latvia was occupied by the Soviet Union) became perhaps more widely read by the Latvian readers than any other foreign belles-lettres writer.

The same soil was also fruitful for Gandhi when he became the acknowledged political leader in India in 1920. Without hesitation the press took the side of the Indians in their struggle against the colonial rule. To the sub-continent were sent reporters who tried to have a closer look at the phenomenon of Gandhi. But they didn't know India well and could not write anything lasting.

Yet there was one exception—the published letters of the protestant missionary Anna Irbe, who, before establishing her own mission in a village not far from Coimbatore in southern India and carrying out a programme of social welfare in addition to her religious activities, for several years travelled and became an ardent supporter of the Mahatma and met him several times.

Reading some of her letters, one could start doubting if she ever would settle down and leave politics to politicians, so much she seems to have been involved in purely worldly affairs.

But let us read what she wrote about the Mahatma: "The foundations of the Ashram established by Gandhi are so ideal that most probably one cannot find similar ones in the whole world." ("Jaunākās zinas", February 21, 1925). "You (she addresses her father—then the only Latvian Lutheran bishop—V.I.) doubt whether Gandhi would be so prominent, if he lived in Europe. I wonder if there is anybody in the whole world who would enjoy such a respect by such different people as Gandhi does" ("Ārmisija", 1928, Number 9, p. 131). "Why do you (again—the missionary's father is meant—V.I.) think that Tolstoy and Gandhi are religious geniuses? I call Gandhi a saint if I compare him with myself and with common people like myself. His soul is pure like a transparent glass, while our souls are covered by thick dust and a layer of dirt. Comparing Gandhi and Tolstoy I should say that in his life Gandhi is doubtless greater than Tolstoy." (it. 1929, Number 1, p. 7). The missionary then was thinking of even taking up the spinning wheel.

One can safely state that Anna Irbe's writing, her profound

knowledge of India and love of the country (to which her published letters testify), where she continued to live till the end of her long life among the untouchables, contributed to the preservation of the peculiarly Latvian image of India.

Since the middle of the 1950s one was allowed and even encouraged in the former USSR, (of which then Latvia was a part), to write about Gandhi. But, of course that could be done only within the limits of state censorship and the official ideology. The Mahatma's name, the non-violent resistance led by him, I would say in a genuinely Gandhian sense, appeared in our newspapers in January 1991, during the Riga barricades two-week period when we were guarding the main institutions of power of the re-established independent Latvia, TV and radio centres against the possible attack of Gorbachev's army. It was prevented by hundreds of thousands of unarmed civilians, spending days and nights in the winter cold around the objects they were guarding and on road bridges around Riga and the central part of the city, and being sure that the spirit of the people's was stronger than tanks.

One wonders if anywhere else, outside India, Gandhi's principles of non-violent resistance proved to be so efficient as in the political struggle in Latvia (also in Lithuania) shortly before the break-up of the Soviet Union.

But we still owe Gandhi translations of his works in our language. The present writer, who is an Indologist and has published several books on India (two of them on Rabindranath Tagore) seems still to be the only one in Latvia who in the last decades has tried to write scholarly papers dealing with the Mahatma's great heritage. □

WHAT MAHATMA GANDHI MEANS FOR US CAMBODIANS?

Son Sourbert

In the main garden area in Central Phnom Penh, capital of the kingdom of Cambodia, there is a bronze bust of Mahatma Gandhi. Last year in 1993, the birth anniversary of the Mahatma was celebrated with a commemoration ceremony with the four main religions of the world (Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and Hinduism) chanting prayers for Him. UNTAC (UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia) was administering Cambodia. Mr. Chandra Mohan Bhandari, the Indian Ambassador to Cambodia, was the initiator of this moving celebration, in which all the four Cambodian factions were represented. I had the privilege to be there too and was remembering my student days, discussing about the Mahatma with other French students in Paris.

Mahatma Gandhi is known to Cambodians as, Mahatma Konthi (), the apostle of non-violence (ahimsa), an arhant, and by educated people as the father of the independence of India, the unifying force, the soul of modern India and the pride of humankind, in one word a man of courage and wisdom. But the critical mind of the French students, looks for the negative side and for flaws: they said that the Mahatma may have been a great man, but he neglected the upbringing of his children, that he could succeed in India only because the British were different from other colonial powers and more understanding. The French students would have criticized the same way Jean—Jacques Rousseau who had written

a treatise on how to big up children, but failed to have a family life. Different from Jean—Jacques Rousseau, these French Christians should have remembered the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, for whom all men and women were his brothers and sisters, and who, while on the cross, entrusted them to his mother as her sons and daughters. Likewise the Indian people were the sons and daughters of Mahatma Gandhi and we saw quite well how they reacted to him, when he was fasting to death because of their inter-religious fighting. Whether Muslims or Hindus, they came to him repentant like his children.

As Buddhists, we feel Mahatma Gandhi's attitude was impregnated with the concept of the middle path, of tolerance, in the sense that the state of Buddhahood otherwise understood as Moksha, liberation or enlightenment, is available to all religions without discrimination. In the same tradition is the experience of Ramakrishna, the master of Vivekananda, who elaborately wrote about how Ramakrishna through the Muslim way or the Christian way reached the experience of God. In the native place of Mahatma Gandhi in Gujarat, as the famous film on him narrated, the influence of Islam is found in the prayers chanted by the Hindus in the temple he used to go to.

Besides the courage which is the prerogative of a liberated man, the Mahatma was also the man of a creative imagination: the ways he organized resistance to the violent powers, until non-violence gained over violence, how he organized the resistance, with the traditional way of hard-string and hard-weaving throughout India, to the Imperial Great Britain: he who was a frail man, how he as David bringing down Goliath, not only brought down the tremendous might of the British textile Industry but also gained their sympathy and admiration. Whether you call it charisma, popularity or celebrity, this is the sign of the Buddhahood, and the Indian people were right in calling Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi Mahatma, the Great Soul. This Great Soul showed in his whole life how an ordinary people can do, when freed from fear.

The whole nation of India mourned him, after Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated by an extremist fanatical. The memory of Gandhi will live on, because it is part of the history of India, of the history of mankind, of the history of those great men who marked their century and the world. India and the Indian people must be proud of Him, and as Asians, we Cambodians are proud of Him. His example guides my attitude also in the Parliament, when I declared that the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party which

I belong to, has chosen the middle way and would help Cambodians, whatsoever they are, to change, whether they are Khmers Rouges, or Khmers blue or white, and to change the whole situation. It is rewarding to hear another MP refering me to Mahatma Gandhi's example, after that. □

MAHATMA GANDHI—A LIFE FOR NON-VIOLENCE

Herbert Fischer

A letter from an almost forgotten old friend on my desk:

We have organised a series of lectures on important political personalities and their contribution to progressive thought and analysis. Could you speak on Mahatma Gandhi—a life for non-violence?

Similar requests drop in almost regularly. Young people, as soon as they realise I have personally known and worked with Gandhiji, are eager to know, who that man was and how he lived. They are usually small groups, but their interest, I find, is encouraging and offers a glimpse of hope in this our unfortunately so violent world. These requests come from various parts of Germany, east and west and from Berlin, of course, where a Gandhi Information Centre attracts quite a number of persons and disseminates knowledge about his life. People from various walks of life come there for information and consultation. They all find Gandhi's life—his message—still relevant, very relevant, here and all over the world. As a matter of fact more relevant than ever before, as humanity seems to be driving towards catastrophe, humanity, to whose service Gandhi devoted his life. Whether the worst can still be avoided and our world saved from destruction, we do not know. But Gandhi's life of non-violence constitutes a ray of hope.

When I stayed with him it was the time when Hitler ruled in Germany, I had to leave the country and found refuge with Gandhi. However, in our talks he again and again maintained, if I believed in non-violence, my proper place would be in Germany to organise non-violent resistance there. My descriptions of the ruthlessness of the Nazi regime, I am afraid, did not convince him. Much has happened in the meantime, here in Germany, in India and everywhere. I think I have not been able to live up to Gandhi's expectations, but it gives me a certain satisfaction to be able, now, towards the end of my life, to contribute, to however small an extent, towards spreading the message of Gandhi and to stress the relevance of this great man and his life for the present age.

I worked under his guidance in the All India Village Industries Association before the Second World War. In 1946, before returning to Germany, I had the opportunity once again to stay with him for ten days.

It was the time when his disappointment with the course of events began to be apparent. His dream of a future peaceful India setting an example for other countries and the whole world showed signs of disintegration, which later led him to the conclusion that there must be "a vital defect in my technique of non-violent struggle". The disillusionment of the last months of his life must have been a horrible ordeal for him, more tragic than his violent death. His desire—so he said—to live for 125 years had vanished completely. Had this former wish come true, he would have lived and suffered up to the present times.

Gandhi did not want to leave behind a new theory or, even worse, a new sect. He did not want any disciples. "I ask nobody to follow me; everyone must act on the promptings of his conscience, you on yours, I on mine, others on their own". This, I feel, implies the continuance of his search for effective methods of non-violent struggle. You will face new problems, he said, which require new ways of solving them. That is his legacy and our task!

He did not want to be venerated either. He wanted co-workers and people to carry on his search for truth and non-violence, to go beyond his possibilities, and to grapple with new and possibly more complicated conditions. Therefore also to work for new ways of thinking, to follow up, what he had begun.

He found, almost all people wanted to get rid of war and yet wars continued—and still continue! He urged the search for the causes of war; he wanted them to be uncovered, then they

would cease. He did not have time to go deeper into this question. Is not the unfortunately very profitable production of arms, fighter planes, warships, mines etc. one of the grave causes of war, if not the gravest? If no arms were delivered, who could or would wage war in the countries of former Yugoslavia, in Somalia, or the other countries ravaged by war and destruction?

There are many tasks devolving on us from Gandhi's message, and it is high time to do that, if humanity and our earth are to be saved. Pure and selfless service to humanity, without fear, that, I consider is the message of his life for us, and this message is highly relevant! □

GANDHI AND THE ARAB PROBLEMS

Mohammed Anees

There is no doubt that the revolutionary Mahatma Gandhi was very compassionate towards the contemporary Arab problems. It is clearly manifested in his writings and speeches.

As far as we understand, this compassion can be attributed to two basic factors: First, the historical, economic and intellectual relations which have kept India and the Arab World together for centuries. These relations are manifested in the give-and-take in the material and the intellectual fields. And second, Gandhi was a revolutionary and cosmopolitan fighter who always stood for truth and condemned fallacies.

It only behoves us that during this year we should review these two factors in some detail.

As regards our historical relations with the Arab World, including the political, economic and cultural, we find them deeply rooted in the days of yore. It is not that the historians talk only haphazardly about the impact and influence that the two civilizations—Indian and that of the Near East, exchanged. Durant's books provide enough material on this.

These relations deepened further with the advent of Islam. As Islam was a "World religion" and India being geographically an accessible country having previous acquaintance with the Middle East and the Central Asia, this new faith of Islam penetrated in all its nooks and corners and the Ummayyid Commander

Mohammed bin Qasim could conquer some parts of the Indian sub-continent. It was not a military conquest only. In fact, later on many Arab tribes and sub-tribes migrated to these places carrying their legacy of habits and ways of life. The Kharjite groups, the Ithna-Ashariyah Shias and the Ismaelites brought alongwith them the Arab-Islamic thought. This combination of the Arab thought with the Indian civilization had far reaching effects not only on the Arab civilization, but it also ultimately enriched human civilization as a whole. We would like to contend here O'Leary's propositions in his book titled *Arabic Thought and its Place in History*, that the Arab civilization is a by-product of the Hellinistic civilization in form and substance. Whereas the fact remains that the Arab contact with India led to the enrichment of the Arab civilization in different fields, including most prominently mathematics and theology besides literature, medicine and other sciences and branches of knowledge. Arabs have always considered India as one of the four big nations having distinctive place in the World. These four nations are the Persians, the Indians, the Byzantines and the Chinese. They have always regarded India "to be the source of wisdom, the spring of justice and the fount of politics". It would suffice to indicate the position of the Indian thought in the canvas of the World civilization that "the theory of transmigration of souls"—and it is purely an Indian feature, has played a significant role in shaping Greek philosophy and Manicheism. It has even influenced Christianity and Islamic asceticism (Sufism). We can also disprove O'Leary's foregoing opinion by underlining that the contemporary European civilization greatly owes to India, especially in respect of numerals that are used in mathematics. In the absence of these the world wouldn't have excelled in the field of the mathematical science which is considered pivotal for the contemporary world civilization. It must be prominently mentioned here that it were the Arabs who transferred the numerical system to Europe, and similarly the cipher or zero which is considered in Europe to be the most precious scientific gift which the Arabs gave to Europe, as Eyre has said in his book titled 'European Civilization'. Besides, there is a common factor that has kept India and the Arab World together in the present times also and that is their exploitation by the colonial forces. They passed through similarly difficult situations and worked hard for their liberation from the clutches of the colonialists. It is in fact not just by chance that India today supports the Arab issues. It has historical, political and intellectual reasons deeply rooted in the past. The Arabs and

the Indians look forward to come out of the deep crisis that the colonial forces created in these regions during their time of occupation.

In this given background, it was but natural that a genius like Gandhi came to exist in that homogeneous land. It was only a by-product of factors deeply rooted in the past. Gandhi only made a great beginning to fight the hurdles in the way of progress and development represented mainly in the colonial forces.

Gandhi's way of fighting injustice and colonialism may be summed up in a nutshell as non-violence, truth and love for all. He considered it to be the only method for solving all problems. In fact, this method has its roots in the Indian reality which is basically spiritual. Gandhi's greatness could turn this ethical principle into a dynamic magical force to face all kinds of challenges which are thrown to mankind by the increasing materialism. It would be only in its place here to quote Gandhi himself to refute the thinking that Gandhi's philosophy is only of his making basically emanating from his typical ascetic nature. Gandhi says: "No one must ever say that he is a follower of Gandhi. I very well know my own weaknesses. I can not live according to my faiths and beliefs for which I am waging the struggle". This thing clearly rejects the belief of some people who say that "the method adopted by Gandhi was correct and nobody should ever find fault with it. Gandhi throughout his life was opposed to anger and force". Similarly, the policy of condemning "violence" was not to be considered as weakness. All that I wish to underline here is that 'non-violence' or 'condemnation of the violence', is not at all a negative means to fight injustice. It is just the opposite. According to our understanding and assessment, Gandhi had full and deep understanding of the forces latent in human beings.

At least in the Indian canvas even if the violent means were to meet with success, that would be short-lived. This kind of success would ever be followed by difficulties that would make it lose its meaning and value and the end result would be a still worse condition than it was before using violence and force. Gandhi had understood very well that the united India made such a formidable force that was bound to achieve success irrespective of the method they choose to adopt. Their mere togetherness and united stand would put success at their feet. He organised 'Satyagraha movement' a non-violent method and thereby he transformed the negative approach of the Indian people into an effective force which shook the British colonial rule from its roots and finally terminated it.

Gandhi through his policies explicated adequately the special qualities and features of the Indian people, the distinctive spirit of the East and in the process he became a 'World leader' who disliked and condemned categorically injustices and declared his all-out support for the right and truth. He said: "The entire mankind is one and if we observe carefully we will find that all the people submit to the same code of virtues". He often declared that all people are equal in the eyes of God.

All this explains for itself Gandhi's support and advocacy for the Arab causes. He knew that the Arab causes were based on justice. Some people might question the diagonal difference between Gandhi's position as a world leader and the status of the issue of Arab nationhood which primarily is an Arab problem. I would like to make it abundantly clear here that there is no difference, contravention and distance between the Gandhian thought and philosophy and the ethnical, racial and political groupings. He was one person who would have supported even 'national' thinking for so long as there was no exploitation or injustices perpetrated. Secondly, he felt that ethnicity or sense of belonging to one group is a step towards the sense of being a 'World citizen'. "It is not just possible that anyone can be a 'World citizen' without belonging to a certain group. 'Internationality is achievable only through ethnicity i.e. belonging to a group. Hence, Gandhi whole-heartedly supported the Arab nationhood against the will of their enemies who employed all their material and physical resources to subjugate them and explore them.

This is precisely the reason that Gandhi often extolled Islam for its humanness, message of love and peace for the entire mankind. In his address at Aden, while on his way to the Round Table conference in 1931, he said: "This great island which is the birth-place of Mohammed and Islam, is a living example of religious tolerance and human values and virtues".

Gandhi had a great desire to drop in at Egypt while on his way to the conference, but the British authorities prevented that. However, no force and nothing else could stop him from supporting the Egyptian cause and its rightfulness. His stand had a positive effect on the political circles. Mustafa Kamal Pasha, the then leader of the Egyptian Wafd party sent to him a telegram saying: "In the name of Egypt for the freedom and independence of which you are working, I welcome you as a great Indian leader. India is another great country which is waging struggle to achieve the same goal as we". Similarly, Safiyah Zaghlol also sent to him in

his capacity as a great Indian leader a telegram of good wishes.

The fact remains that nobody can ignore similarities common to both the Egyptian Wafd party and the Indian National Congress party in their ideology of struggle, and the leadership & the mass base. These similarities were based on similar kinds of circumstances that encompassed the national struggles in Egypt and Asia.

While Gandhi's ideology of struggle was based on non-violence, the Egyptian Wafd party had invented a new method of "negotiations" to achieve independence as against the method of armed confrontation that had followed the Orabi revolution, and the method of the National party which was based on sternness and the use of force without any scope for a negotiated bargain. A keen researcher shall hardly find any substantial differences between the life-styles of the two leaders, Gandhi and Sa'd Zaghlol and the mass-support that each one of them enjoyed. I would rather say that the circumstances that raised each one of them to the position of leadership of the upsurging masses. If the arrest of Sa'd Zaghlol and his comrades in the house of the British representative and their exile to Malta for their just demand for independence, had released the hidden strengths of the Egyptian people which took the shape of the 1919 Revolution, involving all sections of the society irrespective of social and ethnical groupings, which thing even Sa'd Zaghlol himself had not visualised, and he said in a state of great amazement that "all that has happened has astonished him", then Gandhi's challenging the Rowlatt Act which aimed at divesting the Indian people of their civil liberties and his exhorting them to begin their battle against the British occupation in the form of 'Hartal' i.e. general protest by closing all shops and storehouses, had also led, on the Egyptian pattern, to uniting all the Indian people irrespective of caste, creed and religion, so much so that even Gandhi himself may not have foreseen that he could have such a hold over the Indian people. When the British authorities arrested him in April 1919 the news spread like wild-fire. People were very angry to know that, and they started collecting in the cities. Some violent incidents also took place. In the year 1919, India also saw a revolution which the occupation forces put down with a heavy hand as the 1919 revolution of Egypt was crushed. Therefore, there is no wonder that Mustafa al-Nahas worded his telegram the way he worded it and sent it to Gandhi when he was passing Egypt to England. That was to show his gratitude for the Indian leader's compassion

he had for the Egyptian cause. And perhaps his stand vis-a-vis the Palestinian problem makes his opinion about the Arab World very explicit. He had derived this opinion from the deep-rooted Indo-Arab relations spread over centuries and the philosophical mind having an intellectual bent which disliked injustice and condemned violence. He always supported truth. Gandhi's commitment towards ethical precepts and values was unflinching. He did sympathise with the Jews, but he declared that his sympathy for the Jews would not blind him to the requirements of justice. When he did not approve the Zionist demand to establish National Home of theirs by means of partnership with the colonial forces, he asserted that Palestine belonged to the Arabs in the same way as England belongs to the English.

Herein below we reproduce the text of what he said in one of his articles in the "Harijan" issue of November 12, 1938. "Sentimentally, I support the Jews, however, my sympathy for them will never blind me from the requirements of justice. I can not swallow the demand of establishing a National Home for the Jews. Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same way as England belongs to the English and France to the French. If only Palestine were to be the Home of the Jews then what would happen if the Jews are expelled from all the places of their residence in the World?

"The Palestine of which the mention is made in the Bible is not in fact a geographical reality on earth, but, it is in their hearts. Similarly, it won't be correct for them to enter there under the protection of the British canons and sharp-edged arrows—there is nothing that can be said against the Arab resistance to the difficulties beyond them".

Finally, we can say that Gandhi's sympathies and compassion for the Arab issues were based on the historical Indo-Arab relations and on the ethical values and truth. Gandhi had shaped this principle of sympathy which is being adhered to till today. □

Translated from Arabic into English by: S.A. RAHMAN

Reproduced from *Sawtul Sharq*.

A GANDHIAN ASHRAM IN INDONESIA

Gedong Bagoes Oka

Mahatma Gandhi was virtually unknown in the Dutch East Indies, which is now the Republic of Indonesia. It must have been in the early thirties that I happened to read a news item in the *Jaya Bode*, a prominent Dutch language paper at the time. It carried a short paragraph in which was reported the European sojourn of the respected—by us Indonesians, of course—Dr. Soetomo, then the articulate and vocal nationalist leader and freedom fighter. On his return to Indonesia he passed through India to see for himself the impact of Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for India's independence. However, he was quite disappointed to find the movement somewhat 'primitive' with its insistence on *Ahimsa* and *Swadeshi*, requiring his countrymen to live a life of simplicity and honesty. This to Dr. Soetomo smacked of wellnigh the 'stone age'. The Indonesian nationalist's ideal then was to go in for 'modernity', which meant technology and science, thus an education to rid ourselves of backwardness, superstition and feudalism.

It was not until the 'de facto' independence of the Republic of Indonesia, when our first premier, Sutan Syahrir, officially visited India that the name Gandhi appeared in our news again. Still it was only a name, of a great man indeed and a leader, but very much in the nature of reverence we have for saints who live in heaven, thus too remote for Indonesians at large to arouse their interest, leave alone to affect their daily life.

Then it must have been in 1953 that, while browsing in a bookshop in the capital, that I came across the Indonesian translation of Louis Fisher's biography of Gandhi. Having read it with great interest, I lent it to a friend, with whom I wanted to share my excitement, but alas never to see the book back again. A few years later a Dutch friend lent me a copy of the original, "My Experiments with Truth". What an impact it made on my mind, as at the time I was desperately looking for a leader whom I could follow with all my heart. When Gandhi refused to be adored by an enthusiastic young man saying in retort, "What I have achieved you too could achieve, since the same *Atman* resides in every one of us. And like in a laboratory, if the ingredients are the same, the method the same, then the outcome should be the same. So What is there to be admired in me, but the difference of effort and will-power only".

This rang in my ears as the very essence of true democracy, pure and simple. This is what the young generation needed, for they were so ready to follow anyone who could guide their life and enthusiasm. I can still vividly recall the glow and the romance of that period when we were all riding the high waves of ideals and its expectations. How to make this autobiography available for those, who did not read English? Although my own command of the newly-born Bahasa Indonesia was far from perfect, I was convinced that no one would nor could undertake the task. But the story of how this translation became a fact is a miracle and perhaps requires a book by itself.

In 1975, finally, this laborious task was completed. Its third printing was undertaken by the government and it could fairly be said that every school or library now possesses it. In subsequent years the Indonesian version of 'Key to Health'; 'From Yeravada Mandir' and 'Ashram Observances in Action' followed. This translation I believe in some measure helped to make Gandhiji come out as "the greatest Leader in Asia" when a poll was held in the eighties regarding this topic by Indonesia's most popular weekly "Tempo" after publishing its supportive review of the Indonesian Autobiography.

By now several students from prestigious universities have taken Gandhi as the subject matter of their thesis, and while doing so have quoted amply from the Indonesian translations available.

The desire to arouse the interest of my students' awareness of the need of idealistic young people who want to serve the development of our young country started off deep involvement

in students' extra-curricular activities. This led to frequent camps in the countryside or mountains where social topics and other current aspects of life were discussed with plenty of walks and singing and poetry reading thrown in. A couple of years of such activities made me realize that in order to achieve something of a lasting nature, a day-to-day association was inevitable and needed for character-building. Having turned over this idea for a long time in my mind, finally, and not without fear and trembling, we decided to try and establish a Gandhian Ashram. This seemed to be the best way to spread the principles of *Ahimsa* and *Satya*. Our family property at the foot of the temple of Candi Dasa seemed to have been ordained to become the site of the first Gandhi Ashram in Bali. Its name, Candi Dasa, surprisingly, brings out the subtle and yet profound difference between it and the ancient temple of Candi Dasa. Candi which is another name for Kali, while Candi is but another aspect of Truth, Gandhiji's god. With starting this Ashram we indeed took up a tremendous task because it virtually means a lifelong commitment to education, holistic in approach, and spiritual in essence. Concretely we hope that, eventually, some of the members might wish to be trained for Gandhian village service.

The first ten years required every ounce of our energy to establish Candi Dasa's sheer physical existence as we had only some 5 acres of rice-fields and coconut gardens for the subsistence of some thirty people of all ages ranging from kindergarten kids to young men and women, the oldest being fifty-three years old. Of the 28 adults, in fact, only two were committed to Gandhian ideals, the rest mainly came, because they were poor and had nowhere to go, either to earn a living or to improve their lot. Years of trying to keep a group of some 25 youths of both sexes actively and constructively occupied, if only to feed and keep ourselves healthy followed.

Now, only, after 18 years can we say that our daily routine consists in spending most of the day doing physical work, i.e. farming, maintaining our place, serving the comfort of our guests, running our kindergarten and modest dispensary and rest us three to four hours in which to relax, study and pray.

Actual communal labour offered to nearby villages we can afford only incidentally. To imbibe and understand Gandhian thought an interesting method has emerged over the years. The last part of our morning prayer is devoted to half an hour discussion of Gandhian thought. Each member is required any time to be

able to quote from our booklet 'A Thought for the Day'—which has been compiled for this purpose—then explain the reason why that particular thought has been selected and what his/her finding is in daily work and life concerning its application. Needless to say that each quotation has a bearing on current Indonesian events or happenings. A short answer-and-question session follows in which everybody is expected to participate. And as all this is conducted in English as much as possible this hour could be looked upon as "English Class Between Meals". Then 45 minutes are devoted to Hatha Yoga, to be followed afterwards by the individual daily tasks. The younger ones who are still in school attend the regular village school.

Without planning it, we soon found ourselves involved in modest "hotel/business". As the land was not enough to see us through, we were compelled to take in paying guests. Yet it is still hotel business with a difference. For guests are also expected to respect our Ashram's rules such as non-smoking, non-drinking, vegetarian food in the main. As for those who need animal protein, only fish and eggs are available. Further, decent beach wear is required and silence is to be observed during our prayer time. Bali has been trying very hard to give a respectable veneer to tourism, and terms such as 'Cultural Tourism', Educational Tours' and of late "Ecotourism" have been coined as a sop to our conscience. We honestly feel at peace with ourselves to be involved in "Ahimsic Tourism".

From its inception our Ashram was visualized to be developed as a place for all-round education, with emphasis on character-building. To our own gratification we found that over the years other aspects of human interaction have emerged. Canti Dasa just seems to be cut out for a place where minds can peacefully and creatively meet through our guests. Our mealtimes often develop into mini-seminars causing breakfast, lunch or dinner more often than not to last for as long as two hours. Gradually real and proper seminars followed in the wake of these 'table seminars'.

Our first grassroot workers seminar almost failed, but fortunately a powerful political friend of our Ashram whispered into our ear it may be altered and the word non-violence to be crossed out, for the government then was still 'allergic' to the word, as it had 'New Left' overtones. How long it can take man to banish suspicion from his mind, we indeed could attest to. For only seven years later in 1986 could we openly host an international seminar for Asian Muslims, and attended by Muslim scholars and scientists.

Its theme was 'Non-violence and Islam' sponsored by the United Nations University and Nahdatul Ulama, the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia. But most overwhelming was that it was held in a Gandhian Ashram, opened with a Vedic Mantra while meals were preceded with by mantras.

An international seminar on "The Problem of Violence" sponsored by IAHR-International Association for Humanity and Religion—followed in 1991, while the recent international conference organized by the Asian Women Human Rights Council had for its theme "Women against violence".

Grassroots associations and NGO's look upon us as their home. Visits by Yoga and Meditation Groups and Intercultural associations have become a regular feature of our Ashram life. These are in the main from other countries and delegates stay from two to four weeks at a stretch.

Reflecting on the tourist aspect of Ashram Canti Dasa it can be said that without premeditation our guests, have become a concrete and solid part of the dissemination of Gandhian thought and ideals. Most of them have come simply to find peace and relaxation and to recharge their batteries. After a few days, many of them voluntarily join in our Ashram life and the activities of our household. Popular with them are in particular the early market—doing, working in our fields or kitchen or in the carpentry shop. Some even never move away from the Ashram so immersed are they in the various chores. Since natural healing has become 'in' but nowadays, our acupuncture also attracts guests, be it as patients or just as curious but interested observers.

Particularly popular is our "Gandhi hour" for which some of the guests are even prepared to forgo sleeping in. In the evening most of them attend our closing prayer and for the past two years tourists from outside also like to join in our evening prayer. Due to their interest in Gandhian thought and Gandhiji's view of religion many leave our Ashram with recordings of our mantra-chanting and copies of Gandhian literature. Not a few have even become annual 'temporary Ashram members', in particular families with small children.

In 1986 we started a new experiment to receive volunteers from overseas. They stay for two months, the only condition being that they should be interested in non-violent living and besides possess a practical skill which they could use as a means of interaction with our members. They themselves then become "temporary Ashram members" and thus live fully our Ashram

life. In this manner they get the opportunity to participate in our village life, which includes attending ceremonies of the relatives of Ashram members, village celebrations, which are quite frequent in ceremony-loving Bali. The benefit derived from this interaction is mutual: on our part the volunteers enthusiasm and readiness to go hammer and tongs at manual work, which most educated Asians are disinclined to do, is stimulating and shaming us at the same time. On the volunteers' part our traditional and relatively natural way of life opens their eyes to another life-style, while our mistaken impression of American life as it has come across to us through movies and TV or magazines is corrected. But the most precious gain is the exchange of outlook on life during work and play. Then the feeling of "being One World" is palpable. Especially when such volunteering period coincides with our programme of 'Fruitful holidays' which we have devised for our hardworking village teachers to give them a refreshing break from the tedium of their daily existence.

Indonesian students who are in the process of writing their final thesis are encouraged to do this at our Ashram, as are researchers from overseas. We have had some of them staying with us even for as long as three months from Britain, Canada and the United States.

To our delight quite a few of our guests later on have written to us that they have started a similar experiment in their home countries, encouraged by us who believe that even three or four people can start a Gandhian Ashram while keeping down their several jobs. For the main thing is to adhere to the twin principles of *Ahimsa* and Truth in our day-to-day life.

In our 18 years of existence we believe we have created more awareness in Indonesia as well as overseas of the importance of the study of Gandhiji's life and work. From my own experience I can say that no serious-minded person can study the Gandhi phenomenon without being influenced and ultimately compelled to get into some kind of action.

To summarize briefly the impact of Canti Dasa Ashram, which I am never tired of explaining that it is a Gandhian Ashram in the making, but for convenience sake we refer to as Ashram Gandhi "Canti Dasa" we unwittingly have arrived at a four-pronged method in the dissemination of Gandhiji's ideas and ideals.

(a) At the grassroot and village level through our nonviolent

- farming, our health food programme and nature Cure healing.
- (b) At the intellectual/national level through our NGO's meetings and encouragement of serious-minded students to spend a 'fruitful holiday' with us.
 - (c) At the international level, through guests, visitors, international seminars, workshops as well as our own participation in those seminars overseas.
 - (d) The sale of the Indonesian translations of Gandhian literature. On the occasion of the 125th Gandhi Jayanti we launched the Indonesian Translation of R. Richard B. Gregg's, 'A Discipline for Nonviolence' which was a timely publication in view of the current agitation of our students to oppose the building of new mega-hotel projects in Bali.

Even casual visitors or passers-by cannot escape Gandhi's presence in our Ashram. We have noticed that the Gandhian quotations written on the Ashram walls have caused many a person to stop and then to produce a notebook or just a scrap of paper to take down the particular quotation they like. Among the quotations, invariably drawing attention are the following:

"Life spent in Service is the only fruitful life".

"One ounce of practice is worth tons of learning".

"Power comes from sincere service".

"He who does not labour, yet eats, eats stolen food".

"It's a new life every day. This knowledge should be helpful in uplifting ourselves".

But the one that without fail draws attention is the Seven Social sins, of which you see the complete text on our postcard for sale in this building.

Mention should also be made of the manner how we develop and maintain contact with our prominent public figures of whom we may reasonably expect to be potential, fertile soil for Gandhian thought.

Important and profound articles relating to Ahimsa and Truth mainly derived from *Gandhi Marg* and the latest publications on Gandhian literature, we photocopy to be distributed among those who are concerned about true development and freedom.

Among them are for instance the late Dr. Soedjatmoko, dubbed as Indonesia's top intellectual, who was the first Chancellor of the United Nations University in Tokyo. Especially his later writings and speeches reflect his familiarity with Gandhian Thought and the Bhagavad Gita.

Another such person is Dr. K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, the creative and profound Muslim thinker, who has led the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia for the past ten years or so as its President. From a recent poll on 'who is the most published person in the Indonesian media, he came out unchallenged as number one. Being well versed in the Quran, and possessing great common sense besides many talents to be topped by his political acumen, his outspokenness and commitment to democracy, this should not be wondered at. His firm opposition to a nuclear plant contemplated by the Government to be built at Gunung Muria, the region where his Pesantren/Ashram is located made the project hang fire. For he expressed his opposition quietly by simply stating that in the event it becomes reality he would move in with his fellow religionists to offer what could be termed Satyagraha. Without hesitation he has expressed privately as well as publicly that he derived his inspiration from Gandhiji in particular regarding notions of self-improvement, self-restraint and self-help. His respect for all religions is patent, considering his courage to come up for the minority religions in Indonesia if need be.

There is still another such figure whom I must mention i.e. a Roman Catholic Priest, Romo Mangun Wijaya. He like Gandhiji has made 'Daridranarayan' his God and several are the occasions where he took the side of the poor and oppressed. When on one such occasion he announced to offer a hungerstrike I hurriedly sent him Gandhiji's book on fasting to death to alert him to the full implications of such an act. For only a person who has observed *tapasya* for long, long periods could successfully use the weapon of Satyagraha. Also a leader endowed with many talents but with poor health, exactly like Dr. Abdurrahman Wahid, he demands the admiration of any Gandhian-oriented person.

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THE MAHATMA GANDHI, RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIETY

Gilbert Etienne

The gap between urban educated elites and rural masses is an old and widespread phenomenon in most of the Third World and it goes back to the last decades of the colonial rule. Too often, after independence wrong planning decisions have been taken by political leaders who had a limited knowledge, if any, of actual socio-economic conditions in villages. This has led also to such slogans as "ignorant peasants opposed to change".... There are, however, exceptions, some of the major ones being China and India. In the former, the Communist Party under Mao Zedong had lived for over twenty years, before 1949, in the interior of China, where they gathered a solid experience of what was going among farmers. In India it was thanks to Gandhi that the leaders of the Congress Party, in spite of their urban middle class origin, became in a way "ruralized".

II

Here is the situation as described by Nehru, in December 1912: "I attended the Bankipore Conference. It was very much an English-knowing upper-class affair where morning coats and well-pressed trousers were greatly in evidence".¹ Change came fast in the following years. One of the main points of Gandhiji was to emphasize the importance of village India, going along mass

movements in various provinces. Leading personalities of the Congress began walking in the mud or in the dust to see with their own eyes, what was village life and what actually poverty meant.

From the very beginning of his entering the political stage in India, Gandhi advocated a wide programme of uplift of villages, be it in the field of basic education, corporate sanitation, health, diet improvement, better use of farm tools, improvements of crops...²

A number of measures began to be implemented following the Government of India Act of 1935, and the advent of provincial governments run by the Congress in several provinces. In 1938 was created the National Planning Committee of the Congress chaired by Nehru. Its guidelines were to be integrated in the first Five Year Plan (1951–56) following independence. The concern for eradicating poverty and unemployment was prominent like the need to expand agriculture to proceed with agrarian reforms, to develop village panchayats, to start river surveys and flood control, major industry as well as cottage industries. While the country feels the impact of Mahatma Gandhi's approach, the weight of Nehru's thinking on planning was already dominating, a trend which was to expand later on.

While the influence of the Mahatma was paramount in getting leading urban elites nearer to village problems, other currents entered the picture. Though much too limited, the efforts of the British in promoting agriculture should not be forgotten: the creation of agricultural departments, the Cooperative Credit Act of 1904, the beginning of local administration (district boards).

Worth mentioning also were the village improvement experiments, the ones conducted by the Mahatma, by Rabindranath Tagore (1922), by Dr. Spencer Hatch of the Y.M.C.A. in the then State of Travancore, by F.L. Brayne, Deputy-Commissioner in Gurgaon Dt, Punjab, by V.T. Krishnamachari—who later became vice-chairman of the Planning Commission—in Baroda or the Firka Development Programme in Madras Province.³

To sum up, in 1947, India was not starting from zero in the field of rural development. The top leadership was not cut off from villages, thanks largely to the impact of Mahatma Gandhi. Much thinking had already been carried through about what was to be done. Concrete experiments had been introduced, though on a very limited basis. Then, most I.C.S. officers—the majority of them being Indians by that time—had spent several years in

districts. Some of them were to play a major role in rural development after independence.⁴

III

While practically everybody would agree on the wisdom of the Mahatma in building a bridge between urban elites and villagers, his views on the future rural society and development had been from the beginning open to controversies.

Like a number of great thinkers, including Karl Marx and Sir Henry Maine, Gandhiji fell a victim to the view propounded by early British civil servants, particularly Sir Charles Metcalfe, who in the beginning of the last century wrote the following: "The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything that they want within themselves and are almost independent of any foreign relations".

Such a description fitted remarkably well with the ideas of the Mahatma and some of the other nationalists. It implied a kind of local community spirit and relative harmony within the village. The trouble is that the reality, either in pre-colonial days, or during the Raj and after, has hardly been like that, no matter whether we deal with the economic "self-reliance" or the community spirit as pointed out later by a number of Indian and foreign anthropologists following their field studies: As M.N. Srinivas writes "The typical Indian village was not self-sufficient even before the advent of railways and buses, and it is absurd to talk of reviving something that never existed".⁵ Already in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some foreigners bore testimony to plenty of rivalries within the village. It looks "as if there were a constant scramble for superiority among the various trading, artisan and cultivating castes at certain places", wrote U.P.S. Raghuvanshu.⁶ Such a view has been amply confirmed by most village studies carried out after India became independent.

No less important is to realize that the promotion of village councils was bound to favour middle and upper class farmers, belonging to middle and higher castes, at the cost of the poor, particularly the scheduled castes. Now it is puzzling to see how the Mahatma, in spite of his knowledge of villages and his concern for the ones whom he called Harijans missed the point. Till his very last days, he tried to give a prominent place to the panchayats in the Constitution which was being drafted.

Dr. Ambedkar, the great leader of the scheduled castes was

well aware of this danger; that is why he succeeded, as one of the main writers of the Constitution, in reducing the role of the panchayats.⁷

The question came up again in the late 1950's when the Panchayati Raj was introduced by the Government under a three-tier system of councils at the village, block and district level. It surfaced again in the late 1970's and in the early 1990's.

While nobody questions the integrity of the Mahatma, the politicians, who later on promoted the Panchayati Raj were not so idealistic. The official version was, and remains, to encourage "development from below" and to strengthen the local community, but—and this was never admitted openly, the first move in favour of Panchayati Raj and the following ones were seen as means to strengthen the ruling party and catch votes, in addition to less-self-interested motivations!

What happened following the Panchayati Raj was exactly what Dr. Ambedkar had feared: "Panchayati Raj institutions are dominated by economically or socially privileged sections of the society and have as such facilitated the emergence of forces yielding no benefits to weaker sections. The performance of Panchayati Raj institutions has also been vitiated by political factionalism".⁸ From many accounts, it does not seem that the situation has fundamentally changed since that report was published.⁹

These disappointments and doubts do not totally condemn such institutions. They may prove more useful in the long run, but they should not have been seen as an *important* agent of faster rural development and greater social justice.

IV

The basic message of the Mahatma, i.e. the need for the elite—intellectuals, politicians, officers, business people—to get nearer to villagers is even more valid today than it was before 1947. The rural economy remains very important in spite of the overall development achieved so far. A little more than 70 per cent of the population still lives in villages and around 60 per cent of the working population remain in agriculture. The latter carries a heavy weight on the whole economy even if its share is falling (now around 30 per cent of G.D.P.).

The gap between urban elites and peasants is getting narrower as seen from villages, but growing when observed from cities. Villagers do travel more and more, a growing number of them

find jobs in towns. Radio, newspapers, TV, are more and more common in villages. As a result rural people are increasingly informed about what is going on in Indian towns and even abroad.

On the other hand, a growing number of urban middle and upper class people have become less and less familiar with village life, no matter whether we take caste and class relations, changes in the pattern of living, in the local economy. More and more urban dwellers belong to families who settled in a town one, two or three generations ago, if not more, so that, especially young people belonging to the upcoming elites are cut off from the countryside.¹⁰ Such a situation, which is not peculiar to India—in fact it is worse in a number of other developing countries—is obviously not healthy, no matter whether we consider social issues or economic policies.

Some big firms have well understood this in terms of sales policies, even if their aims do not correspond to the ideal of the Mahatma! For instance, when Hindustan Lever recruit young M.B.A. holders from the well known Ahmedabad Institute, they begin by sending them for three months in a village to study local socio-economic conditions. Lakme from the Tata Group send its newly recruited young officials to a district town for the same purpose.

While such trends are welcome, no matter what the purpose is, it is to be feared that they are not widespread. It is particularly worrying to see the limited interest among academics in village and district studies, while “Economists have been diligent in extracting every ounce of information (from government statistics and National Sample Surveys) the idea that they themselves undertake fieldwork does not seem to occur to them... This is indeed perplexing, as they are anxious to end exploitation of the poor and oppressed. But these laudable aims have not created in them a desire to come into close human contact with the objects of their concern and sympathy”.¹¹ Since this was written, the gap has become worse, not only with reference to the academic world, but to many other professions.

To conclude, and the phenomenon is not confined to India, some process à la Gandhi of ruralization of the elites would be more welcome than ever. □

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3. See *The Evolution of the Community Development Programme in India*, New Delhi, Ministry of Community Development... 1963.
4. One of the most striking examples is B. Sivaraman, one of the fathers of the Green Revolution in the later part of the 1960s.
5. M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India*, Bombay, Asia, 1962, p. 78.
6. Quoted by D.M. Mandelbaum, *Society in India*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1970, vol. II, p. 431.
7. These facts are not so well known. I got them from somebody close to the Mahatma's family.
8. *Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions*, New Delhi, Ministry of Agriculture, 1978, p. 6-7.
9. See the critical comments of K. Subramanyam (*Economic Times*, 29.6.93) on the Constitutional Amendment on Panchayati Raj Institutions.
10. Rising elites out of the O.B.C. (other backward classes) are on the whole still much less cut off from the villages which they have recently left. But, if they are asserting themselves in politics, they still are far from prominent in the high administration, in business, in advanced education and other professions.
11. M.N. Srinivas, "Village Studies, Participant Observation and Social Science Research in India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, special no, August, 1975.

THE RELEVANCE OF GANDHIAN THOUGHT TO CONTEMPORARY NAMIBIA

Peter H. Katjavivi and W. Richard Jacobs

Introduction

Gandhian thought is characterized by the twin pillars of political consciousness and non-violence of and by the masses as the surest route to achieving true independence—*SWARAJ*.

Gandhi who is universally recognized as the first anti-imperialist leader of the modern age, was, as K.R. Minogue has pointed out “a man of both thought and action. Although not a philosopher (in the strictest sense of that word) he was a systematic and careful thinker in the habit of reflecting and theorising his experience.” (K.R. Minogue, *Nationalism*, London, 1980, p. 4).

It is in this context that Gandhi has had a most profound effect on a wide range of anti-imperialist leaders who have come after him. Kwame Nkrumah, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Sam Nujoma are but a few from a long list of distinguished freedom fighters who have been influenced by Gandhi's thoughts. Nanda records that “the most distinguished and enthusiastic exponent of Gandhi's ideas in Africa” was Kenneth Kaunda of what was then Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). “Gandhi and Jesus”, writes Kaunda's biographer, ‘had a special magnetism for twenty-four-year old Kaunda. He saw them as realists with a vision and rejected the popular notion that this was a contradiction

in terms. When Kaunda visited India in 1975, he recalled: 'Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru were heroes not only of the Indian People but of the entire oppressed peoples of the world. At least that is how we saw them in our part of the world'. B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi and His Critics*: (OUP, Bombay, 1993). p. 33).

Such influences often take the form of emulation rather than imitation, if only because the concrete situation and circumstances of each struggle by definition, differs. It is this concrete situation that influxes the direction of the struggle and determines the strategies and tactics that are to be applied in seeking to achieve the ultimate objective of peaceful development for all the citizens of the nation-state.

In the case of Namibia, the nature of the struggle for *SWARAJ* was influenced by a wide variety of factors. First, the prevailing world balance of forces had led to the legitimization of an imperialist vocabulary that permitted "anti-communism" to be used as a justification for brutality and repression which had no recourse to humanistic values or morality.

Secondly, the fact that the colonizing power (South Africa) literally bordered on Namibia, permitted the almost unlimited movement of the repressive machinery of the state (army and police) from the colonizer to the colonized without let or hindrance.

Third the physical characteristic of the greater percentage of the land area of Namibia being desert or semi-desert and sparsely populated posed serious challenges to the organization of armed resistance.

Fourth, the ideology of apartheid had as its objective the promotion of racialist policies that divided the society along racial lines, and at the same time dehumanized the African majority, denying them access to education and other basic social services. All of these characteristics of South African colonialism fundamentally influenced the nature of the struggle of the Namibian people and determined the applicability and indeed the utility of Gandhian thought to the liberation struggle.

Another factor that was of critical importance in the applicability of Gandhian thought is the fact that subsequent to the independence of India in 1947 several other liberation struggles were successfully executed in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The experiences of these anti-imperialist confrontations, added to, and enriched, Gandhian thought to the point where the various techniques of struggle could be described as a synthesis of the best, most successful and most appropriate methods of

approach in the search for SWARAJ.

Even so, the Gandhian thought shone through each synthesis like a beacon indicating its pride of place in the eternal campaign for freedom and justice. It is fitting therefore that the Executive Board of UNESCO at its first 1994 meeting recognized Mahatma Gandhi as a "world personality of great spiritual, political and cultural dimensions whose thought and action continue to profoundly influence contemporary society in significant ways". (UNESCO Paris 1994: 141 Ex/Decisions p. 58 B 1.2).

Background

Namibia was colonized by the Germans in 1890. Almost from the first moment of colonization the Germans embarked on an extremely harsh colonization process. By 1903 the Africans' land had been reduced to 31.4 million hectares out of a total land area of 83.5 million hectares. The German leader of the Settlement Commission ordered that "the native tribes must withdraw from the lands on which they have pastured their cattle and so let the white man pasture his cattle and on the self-same lands". (J.H. Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, Oxford 1967, p. 196).

Responding to this harsh treatment, the local inhabitants, particularly the Herero people, rose up against the German rule. They launched an attack against the German occupying force in January 1904.

Historians record that

By the end of August 1904, the entire Herero people, were driven into the Omaheke desert and thousands massacred by German troops. The German Commander, von Trotha, had issued an extermination order:

"The Herero people must depart from the country. If they do not, I shall force them to with large cannons. Within the German boundary every Herero, whether found armed or unarmed, with or without cattle, will be shot". (M.O. 'Collaghan, *Namibia, the effects of apartheid on culture and education*: UNESCO, Paris, 1977 p. 18) Sixteen thousand Hereros survived out of a total population of about 60,000. (H. Bley, *German South West Africa in Segal and First (ed) South West Africa, Travesty of Trust*, London, 1967) Quoted in *Namibia: The Facts*: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa (IDAFSA) p. 9).

When the Germans were themselves defeated in the First

World War, South West Africa became a British Protectorate under the League of Nations Mandate. The British then handed over their responsibilities of administering South West Africa to the South Africans who promptly proceeded to incorporate Namibia effectively into the Union of South Africa.

Like the Germans before them, the South Africans seized the land, violently repressed the indigenous population and introduced laws to restrict the African's political rights and ensure a cheap supply of labour. Within five years the policies and practices of apartheid had been fully imposed on the Namibian people.

The harshness of that system of rule is well known. Mahatma Gandhi himself suffered the indignity of racial discrimination and insult during the twenty years that he lived and struggled against that system in South Africa. But as Nanda has pointed out.

It was in South Africa that Gandhi acquired these remarkable qualities of leadership which enabled him to take the levers of the Indian nationalist movement in his hands. (Nanda, *op. cit.*, p. 31)

Namibians suffered as a people. They were systematically deprived of their land and restricted to barren and agriculturally unusable "native reserves". They were subjected to a "Bantu education" system that was designed to prepare them only to be servants of the apartheid system. The social "services" available to them were designed to dehumanize the African people. The same was true of the jobs available to them and the treatment to which they were subjected at their place of labour.

Of course, the system of apartheid dehumanizes the perpetrator as much as it does the recipient. As a result, the efforts of the Namibians to peacefully resist the brutalities of apartheid were met with the harshest of inhuman oppression. Up to the very eve of the liberation of Namibia, the South African colonizers, murdered, imprisoned and terrorised the leaders as well as the people. The laws of oppression are well known. Trade Unions and political parties that sought to organize the masses and develop their consciousness, were suppressed. Gatherings of more than seven were against the law. Public demonstrations were banned. Hit squads were organized by the colonial authorities to kill all those who persisted in their resistance.

Despite the intense and ubiquitous repression and terrorization of the population by the colonial authorities, the resistance against the occupying power continued unabated.

It is in this context that non-violence as a tool of resistance

lost its relevance to the concrete Namibian experience, and the liberation movement not only had to conduct the struggle from outside, but it had also to confront the colonial aggressor on its own terms. Armed struggle therefore, was identified by the Namibian people as the most appropriate method by which to confront and defeat the violence that the colonizers had visited upon the Namibian people. The main objective of the armed struggle was to bring an end to colonial violence and to end the systematic violation of the rights of the Namibian people by the colonizers. The final goal was peace—the essence of Gandhian thought.

For twenty-four years SWAPO waged the armed struggle against the South African interlopers. Throughout that period, every straw that seemed to come on the scene was grasped at, with a view to ending the war and achieving peace. It was with this in mind that in 1966 when the war of liberation began in earnest, the two pronged policy of diplomacy and fighting was adopted. In pursuit of the diplomatic track the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 435 in 1978 with a view to organizing free and fair elections among the citizens of Namibia to enable them to choose their own political leadership. This resolution was not implemented until 1989, when in the elections in November of that year, SWAPO won 57 per cent of the votes. On the basis of proportional representation which was accepted as the parliamentary model to be followed, SWAPO received 57 per cent of the seats in the National Assembly which then elected Dr Sam Nujoma as the first President of Namibia. Faced with the monumental task of transforming a war-torn society into a tranquil and productive nation state, Dr Nujoma decided to proclaim the policy of national reconciliation as the basis upon which Namibia would seek to weld the disparate groups created by apartheid into one nation. The objective was and is to build a civic culture out of a fractured edifice that is the legacy of apartheid, and this is where the twin pillars of Gandhian thought play a most decisive role.

Reconciliation and the Civic Culture— the role of Gandhian Thought

Seventy-three years of apartheid ideology bequeathed to Namibia a society divided to the core. The World Bank Report characterizes the “red line” as a symbol of division within the Namibian society. This Red Line is a fence introduced by the German colonial administration that extends across East to West

about one-quarter of the way South of the border with Angola. The fence has only two openings. It was erected to keep diseased game and cattle in the north from contaminating healthy cattle in the Central and South. The fence also divides communal (African) from commercial (white) agriculture and is a symbol of the rift between the two Namibias at opposite ends of the economic spectrum.

The white population which is no more than five per cent of the total, is mostly urban and enjoys the incomes and amenities of a modern West European country. The black population, mostly rural, lives in abject poverty. What the white population earns in a day of work, the urban black population earns in two weeks and the rural black population in one year.

Black Namibians are not only in poorer health and less educated than white Namibians—hence likely to be less productive—they also have fewer assets and have been denied access to highly productive employment. In 1965 the Ordendaaal Commission assigned some 33.3 million hectares to 10 black homelands and 34.9 million hectares to white commercial farmers. (World Bank Report No. 9510—NAM *Namibia—Poverty Alleviation with Sustainable Growth*, Oct. 1991, p. i).

This economic division replicates itself in the socio-psychological sphere as well. The white Namibian has been bred to feel intellectually and socially superior to the black Namibian who has been forced into a position of social and intellectual inferiority.

Faced with these stark socio-economic divisions, the Founding Framers of the Constitution sought to draft a document that would serve as the foundation for a civic culture. This required a framework for majoritarian rule that would at the same time establish a legitimacy that would be acceptable to the powerful white minority.

By an extraordinary act of statesmanship, the forty-one elected representatives of the people, reflecting the views of the entire racial, economic and political spectrum of Namibia produced such a document in the Constitution of Namibia. The task of building the nation on the basis of national reconciliation acquired a framework and a frame of reference.

This framework required a fundamental departure from the Marxist perspective that prevailed during the period of the liberation struggle. Like Gandhi, the Namibian leadership under the direction of Dr. Sam Nujoma, while cherishing the Marxist concept of

antagonistic class interests, nevertheless emphasized the philosophy of human unity through the articulation of the policy of national reconciliation. Such an approach required the adoption of a strategy of simultaneous struggle on moral, political, social, economic and cultural fronts—precisely the approach pioneered by Gandhi. (See Parekh, B. *Gandhi's Political Philosophy—A Critical Examination*: London, Macmillan 1989, p. 4).

This necessitated an appreciation of the society from the perspective of the victims of the established social order. This was not particularly difficult for Sam Nujoma and the SWAPO leadership to achieve, precisely because, like Gandhi, they had all come from the very bottom of the social pile and had been subjected to the very same experiences of dehumanization that had been the lot of the masses under the apartheid system.

Like Gandhi, therefore, SWAPO found it necessary to concentrate their energies on building up the courage, confidence and organized strength of the victims. Their understanding of their mission was to empower the masses with a belief in themselves and their abilities so that they would be able to undertake the responsibility of socio-economic self-sustaining growth. In the context of the Namibian experience this has required the abolition of the Bantu-education system, and making available high quality education to the mass of the population. This task has begun in earnest and the stage has already been set for the implementation process.

Empowerment also required the availability of business opportunities to the black majority. This too has been a feature of the SWAPO administration. Business opportunities have begun to open up to black people in all sectors of the economy and role models are being established which will serve to reinforce the confidence of the oppressed that they too can make it to the highest levels of intellectual and material achievement.

The question of building the organized strength of the disadvantaged is at the core of the mobilizational policies of SWAPO. One can see this manifested in the organization of the party itself as well as in the organization of associational interest groups. Thus in recent times trade unions have been organized to represent domestic and farm workers—among the most oppressed of the historical victims of apartheid. And the African communal farmers who have been greatly disadvantaged as compared to the white commercial farmers have also recently formed themselves into a trade union. These are central factors in empowering the poorest

of the poor and one can clearly see Gandhian thought at work here.

Gandhi's belief that the state has a vital role to play in promoting social and economic justice (See Parekh *op. cit.*, p. 118) is fully shared by Namibian's political leaders. Perhaps the greatest injustice perpetrated by the apartheid colonial regime was the denial of human dignity and an honest opportunity for advancement. To redress this wrong, the Founding Framers of the Namibian Constitution inserted an important constitutional Article (23) on affirmative action. This Article seeks to provide the basis for Namibians from the previously disadvantaged groups—to get an opportunity to achieve their fullest potential in accordance with their capabilities. The state's role in promoting social and economic justice is broadly reflected in Chapter 3 of the Constitution which deals with Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms. This Chapter abolishes the death penalty, prohibits slavery and forced labour, gives the right to a fair trial, and guarantees the rights of children and the right to education for all.

These tasks and responsibilities assigned to the state by the Namibian Constitution reflect Gandhi's perception of the state as "an instrument of social and economic justice, a protector and promoter of the public morality and some aspects of private morality, a custodian of [Indian] civilization and the patron of the grand *yajna* of national regeneration". (*Ibid.*, p. 119).

The Duty of Citizens—the Defence of SWARAJ

One of the concepts central in Gandhian thought is *SWARAJ* which was first used by Dadabhai Naoroji in his address to the Calcutta Congress in 1906. Although Naoroji did not invent the word, he used it to connote the striving for independence—a concept which encapsulated the whole spirit of independence and included liberation, freedom, self-determination, self-government and autonomy. (See I. Jesudasan, *A Gandhian Theology of Liberation*, p. 47). Of great importance to *SWARAJ* too, is a nationality that encompasses all of the existing religious groups. In India this was referring to Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Jesudasan makes the telling point that Gandhi's concept of *SWARAJ* was a democratic one based on the individual responsibility and duty of each citizen. Gandhi stated in this regard that:

Every citizen renders himself responsible for every act of his government. And it is quite proper to support it so long as actions of the government are bearable. But when they hurt him or his

nation, it becomes his duty to withdraw his support. (Parekh, *op. cit.*, p. 125).

This concept of *SWARAJ* was deeply embedded in the Namibian liberation struggle. Indeed SWAPO's motto is "Solidarity, Freedom, Justice"—a neat summary of *SWARAJ*. The concept of "Solidarity" in the SWAPO motto must be understood both at the international and national levels. At the international level it refers to the mutual support of all peoples from all nations who struggle for freedom and justice. At the national level, it seeks to negate the racism and tribalism that was such a characteristic feature of the apartheid regime. Thus, solidarity for SWAPO at the national level translates into racial and tribal unity in the struggle for justice and freedom—a direct link to Gandhi's concept of nationality which sought to weld the Hindus and Muslims into one nation and to negate the divide-and-rule tactics of the British colonizers.

SWAPO's concept of Freedom was succinctly stated in its Constitution pledged to "fight relentlessly for immediate and total liberation of Namibia from colonialist and imperialist occupation" with the aim of uniting all the people of Namibia irrespective of race, religion, sex or ethnic origin into a cohesive, representative, national political entity.

The SWAPO Constitution stresses opposition to racism, tribalism and sexism and projects the establishment in Namibia of a democratic, secular government founded upon the will and participation of all the Namibian people. The victory of the liberation forces and the establishment of an independent Namibia in 1990 effectively set the stage for the achievement of *SWARAJ*. For as Gandhi, along with all who seek to transform society, recognized, the achievement of independence is only a step in the long journey of achieving true justice. This is particularly true of societies like India and Namibia whose long experience of colonization has led to the inculcation of alien values including communal hostilities, in the minds and hearts of the people. It is the task of *SWARAJ*, and the responsibility and duty of each citizen, to cleanse himself or herself of these alien values and develop what Gandhi called a "national consciousness".

This consciousness required *Khadi*—honest daily hard work. Dr. Sam Nujoma has emphasized the need for hard work by the Namibian people if they are to achieve the objective of liberating themselves from the dehumanizing experience of apartheid colonialism. Such hard work is to be undertaken at both the manual and intellectual levels. The Namibian Constitution reinforces this

commitment of the nation to manual and intellectual labour and as a consequence links the state's role in promoting social and economic justice to the individual responsibility of citizens in an independent and sovereign nation state. This linkage reinforces the point that is so central to Gandhian thought that the individual is ultimately responsible for the way he is treated by society.

As he remarked, those who behaved like worms invited others to trample upon them and it was the coward who created the bully. (K.R. Minogue, *op. cit.*, p. 5). Thus the development of self-esteem in the individual, by definition, strengthened the nation as a whole. This idea has been repeatedly preached by the Namibian leaders—a further reflection of the relevance of Gandhian thought to contemporary Namibia.

The Universalism of Gandhian Thought

Kwame Nkrumah whose country—Ghana—achieved independence one decade after the independence of India, made the oft-quoted declaration on the occasion of the celebration of Ghana's independence, that "Ghana is not free until the whole of Africa is free". That was a succinct restatement of Gandhi's concept of nationalism. "My idea of nationalism," he stated, "is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole country may die so the human race may live". (M. Desai, *Gandhiji in Indian Villages*, Madras (Ganesan, 1927) p. 170.

It is this very universalism that contributed in no small measure to the independence of Namibia. It has become almost a clichè in Namibian political rhetoric to say that Namibia is a child of the international community. For without doubt, international support and solidarity was a significant factor in ensuring the implementation of U.N. resolution 435. It is by no means accidental, that India, the land of Gandhi, was the first nation-state to award full diplomatic status to the SWAPO representative in that country at the height of the liberation struggle.

The very Constitution of the Republic of Namibia is a testimony to the universalistic nature of democratic ideas and ideals and it goes without saying that the Namibian Constitution is a compilation of centuries of democratic experiences of a wide variety of nation-states.

It comes naturally to Namibia and its leaders therefore, that the democratic concerns of its neighbours are also the concerns of Namibia. It was thus characteristic of Namibia to take the

international line at the dawn of its own independence that until South Africa is free, it could not consider itself free. This was not just a rhetorical stance. In the midst of its own financial difficulties, Namibia found it possible to make a substantial financial contribution (US \$750,000) to the two South African liberation movements—the ANC and PAC—with a view to projecting their messages to the electorate during the election campaign of April 1994.

Just as the Muslim-Hindu conflict pained Gandhi a great deal the civil wars in Africa are a matter of grave concern to the Namibian political leadership and people. Such a concern can only be understood in the context of the kind of nationalism that Gandhi spoke about—a nationalism without boundaries. Thus, Dr. Sam Nujoma has taken a special and personal interest in trying to bring an end to the Angolan and Mozambiquan civil wars. This has taken the form of frequent personal interventions with a view to fostering harmony between the competing national entities very much in the same way that Gandhi intervened in the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India.

Of course it is fair to point out that the objective of this intervention is both idealistic and pragmatic. Idealistic in the sense that the promotion of harmony within Africa heightens the prestige of the whole continent and instills in its people the capacity to achieve a spiritual and cultural unity that heightens self-esteem and establishes the basis for the achievement of *SWARAJ*.

It is pragmatic in the sense that a civil war on one's borders can spill over into one's own country and create all the disruptions associated with that type of conflict. Indeed, a civil war on one's border creates refugees in one's own country which inevitably puts a strain on the resources available to one's citizens. To the extent that the Angolan civil war could spill over into Namibia, this would have the effect of disrupting agricultural and commercial life and thus negatively affecting the welfare of the citizens of Namibia. Thus both idealism and pragmatism dictate Namibia's devotion to promoting universalism, regionalism and globalism.

Indeed Namibia's commitment to parliamentary democracy and the promotion of a civic culture serves as an example to her neighbours as to how non-violence can be institutionalized and provide the solution to the most vexing of problems. The promulgation of the policy of national reconciliation is not exactly *AHIMSA*, but it does presuppose an ability on the part of those who have been hurt in the past to put aside that pain and refrain from inflicting the experience of that pain upon others. In a sense,

national reconciliation could be seen as an adaptation of *AHIMSA* to the Namibian experience. This provides an example of how Gandhian thought can be adjusted to concrete circumstances. It is a reaffirmation that Gandhi's ideas are dynamic, alive and adaptable to the real world.

Conclusion

As Gandhian thought is systematically applied to each particular situation it becomes increasingly relevant and universally applicable. This has the effect of broadening and deepening the concepts inherent in his thoughts. The purists might object, but the real world rejoices in the accessibility that this living philosophy provides for the action-oriented thinker.

In the Namibian situation, at first glance, Gandhian thought appears inapplicable because the Namibian people were forced to resort to a war of liberation to achieve *SWARAJ*. But the principal objective of that war was to develop the political consciousness and the confidence of the people so as to empower them to reach their highest potential through the application of *KHADI*. This the Namibian people are doing through the creative implementation of the policy of national reconciliation. This policy is spearheaded by the democratic Constitution which ensures the state's role in promoting social and economic justice, while at the same time reinforcing the individual responsibility of citizens.

Gandhian thought is not only applicable to the internal Namibian situation, it is also applicable to the external situation, in so far as the nationalism of liberation, development and popular consciousness knows no territorial boundaries. Such an approach serves both the idealistic and pragmatic programmes of the political leadership and reinforces the relevance of Gandhian thought to contemporary Namibia. □

OUTLINE: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Jose A. Lutzenberger

In our modern industrial culture, when the powerful face the ecological predicament at all the prevailing view is, that it is a technical problem, that technical fixes will do. But we are very adept at solving technical problems, then, why are things getting worse all the time?

The fact is, it isn't a technical problem. The true, the profound cause of our troubles is philosophical, ethical, it is religious in the deepest sense of that word. It has to do with our attitudes, attitudes that derive from our worldview.

Perhaps we should ask ourselves, why is it that the Technological Revolution occurred in Christian Europe and not among the Hindus, the Buddhists the Incas, Mayas or Aztecs? If clean science inexorably leads to unrestrained technology, then, it really should have happened in Greece. It took the West only two hundred years to go from primitive, inefficient steam-engines to supercomputers and landings on the Moon. Try to think of what the world would be like today if the beginning had been with the Greeks instead of in the eighteenth century in Europe. Could we have survived two thousand years of technological "growth"? Certainly not, unless we developed a kind of wisdom we don't have today. But why did it not begin with the Greeks?

Medieval Christians had a very peculiar worldview derived from Genesis: the concept of a personal creator of the Universe, who stood outside and above the world, who created us in his image and put us on a special level below him, but above the other creatures, who signed a covenant with us, giving us Paradise with all that lived in it for our use and pleasure. When we disobeyed his arbitrary will we were thrown out of Paradise. So the world we live in is a bad place. The biblical Jews, therefore, went looking for the lost paradise, but they looked for it here on Earth. But the Christians, a sect of Judaism, conceived of heaven and hell outside the world we live in, desacralizing it even more. For medieval Christians the World was a valley of tears, a bad place, where you kind of had to pass an examination. If you passed it with lots of suffering down here, with penitence, scorn for the pleasures of the body, you went to heaven; if you failed you fell into the furnaces of eternal hell.

From this macabre worldview we inherited a limited, I would say, a stunted ethics. Our ethics excluded most of the creation. If we still call ourselves believing Christians, Jews or Muslims, it concerns itself with relations among us humans and humans with God. There is no sacredness in the relations between humans and our fellow living beings or with the non-living part of the World, such as mountains, rivers, and oceans, a relationship that was very pronounced and very sacred with most of the tribal people and the non-Jewish and non-Christian philosophies and worldviews.

Today, if we call ourselves materialists, communists, agnostics, and what not, it is even worse. Now, it is only human relations that count. This is very typical of our predominant economic doctrines. They completely exclude Nature, they actually and vigorously promote maximum exploitation of Nature. When Indians fight against the clearcutting of their "sacred" forests or the mining of their "sacred" mountains, that is an attitude completely foreign to us and we simply disrespect the aborigines, as is happening in North America.

In the case of Nazism and Stalinism it was still worse. For Hitler, all those he defined as non-Aryans were fair game, and Stalin had no qualms killing those he called class-enemies. But even our "democracies", in case of war, don't mind dropping carpets of bombs on civilian populations, as was done during the last World War. We still have thousands of atom-bombs mounted on missiles ready for mass-genocide. All attempts at disarmament

are slow and piecemeal.

When Medieval Christians recovered Greek science they retained their view that the Earth is a bad place and they retained the missionary spirit of fundamental Christianity. This led to a prostitution of science. From simply a clean dialogue with Nature, contemplation of the divine beauty of the Universe, as it was for the Greeks, Science came to be seen as almost exclusively as an instrument for the domination of Nature.

From this view evolved our modern industrial culture, a fanatical religion that conquered the whole world. It has, as its basic dogma, the unwritten postulate that the Earth is imperfect, that we humans must improve upon it and that the key to salvation is technology. The prevailing doctrine divides humanity into developed and developing countries. The idea being that every place in the world should eventually reach the standards of hedonism and wasteful consumption that we now have in the so-called First World. But even the First World doesn't think it has arrived, it wants still more luxury, it wants unlimited growth in material comfort.

This new, fanatical religion has an inverted scale of virtues. Whereas all previous religions, philosophies, political movements, at least for internal use, preached frugality, responsibility, loyalty, discipline and so on, today, a child that develops its worldview and its ethics in front of the TV-set will see virtue in hedonism, orgiastic behaviour, cheating, wastefulness, unlimited acquisitiveness. A devilish religion!

Unless we find ways of overcoming this moral disgrace we have no future, we will continue demolishing the living World. We have forgotten that we are part of it, that an organ cannot prey on the rest of the organism into which it is systemically integrated.

The mental revolution will be difficult, but millions of people are striving, are looking for a new, actually very old, world-view. But we also have a new, scientifically based way of looking on our only home, the Planet Earth. A view from which we can derive a new holistic ethics to make possible a reintegration of civilization with the creation. The GAIA-concept that sees the Planet Earth as a functional unit, as an integrated organism with its own physiology and homeostatic self-regulation, is a concept that can move scientist and layman alike. It can be seen in purely scientific terms, the Earth as the super-ecosystem. Or, for those with no scientific knowledge, for people who think in mystical

terms, it offers the enchanting image of the "Living Planet" that requires our reverence and loving care, as opposed to the view today common in the cabinets of technocrats that sees the Earth as only a free storehouse of resources to be taken, used or wasted for whatever insignificant whim of ours.

Contrary to the religious view that forged European thinking, the Buddhist worldview has no points to conflict with true science, it is a GAIA'n Worldview. In our western culture, knowledge and wisdom are separate. They must be joined again!

Let's all work on this moral revolution!

□

GANDHI AND SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

J. George Waardenburg

This brief essay attempts to look at some possible relationships between the thinking and message of Mahatma Gandhi and recent developments in international thinking about development, viz., the rise of the concept of Sustainable Human Development.

Gandhi worked and wrote in a time in which the parlance of development was not yet current, and so his writings may not be recognised to belong automatically to the literature on development. In the mainstream of the international development literature his insights have not been ignored completely, but interest in them has been clearly much less than his influence on post-independence India. While millions of people outside India have heard and taken to heart his message of non-violence (ahimsa), even though sometimes missing its deeper spiritual and socially active connotations, it is more difficult to pinpoint his influence on development policies and action outside India. Even within India, though a strong Gandhian movement has had its impact on India's development process and development policies, the latter were on the whole dominated by other ideas, and the recent change in general economic policy has not changed this state of affairs. The excellent exposition of what a truly Gandhian development strategy would imply by Das (1979) shows for that matter how large its distance is from both actual developments and policies in India.¹ While the discussion of small scale production

units, of labour intensive artisanal production at the village level, of self-reliance (*swadeshi*), and is not uncommon in the development literature, the importance of micro-groups or of the trusteeship of large scale economic organisations is hardly, if at all, discussed in it.

Is this all that can be said about the relationship between Gandhi's insights and the international thinking about development? I would not think so. The thinking about development itself is not a closed body of knowledge, but an open process with clear changes in emphasis over time. This opens a new perspective for the subject of this essay, in as far as we may ask whether certain of these (recent) changes in development thinking make it move in a direction which brings it nearer to the experiences and message of Gandhi. We will take up this question after a brief sketch of some of these changes over time and in particular of some recent changes.

In the early development literature of the fifties there was a strongly mechanistic element: economic growth was the objective of development and investments were its instrument. The state had a large role in ensuring an intersectoral balance in the investments, a balance which the market could not provide for in time and in a period of rapid structural change. Other societal needs in the areas of e.g. poverty, income distribution and employment would, more or less automatically, be taken care of by economic growth.

When it became clear during the sixties that, even in the presence of not inconsiderable economic growth, poverty and unemployment could persist and even increase, in the seventies basic needs strategies were developed. These strategies focussed on a broad spectrum of social objectives beyond economic growth alone. As the market forces were not supposed to serve these objectives automatically an even larger responsibility for the state was implied. In the same period more radical analyses were made, sometimes along Marxist lines, of power relationships, core-periphery relations, and dependency. Not only the role of transnational corporations but also that of the state in developing countries was criticized and the need for collective self-reliance of the countries in the south was emphasized.

The eighties brought a considerable reversal of this trend, helped by the sobering effect of the "second oil crisis" and the concomitant world-wide economic crisis in the early eighties. The international debate became dominated by the widespread, and

by the conservative governments in the USA and Great Britain supported, belief in the effectiveness of market forces also with regard to processes of development. This questioned the role of the state in development, a state which indeed in certain cases was overburdened and not fully effective but in other cases, like in the newly industrializing countries (South Korea, Taiwan), was very active and successful. Structural Adjustment Policies became generally advised by the IMF and the World Bank, as conditions for financial support, drawing attention towards necessary macro-economic balances but away from the human micro-realities of development processes, with sometimes a rather general suggestion that these concerns could be left to the "informal sector". The breakdown of the long-standing communist regimes in Middle and Eastern Europe furthered the international attention being drawn away from the problems of development and of developing countries. Some people speak openly of the eighties as the "lost decade for development".

In the nineties, however, the pendulum begins to swing back and some hopeful tendencies appear to emerge gradually. In the eighties already the Brundtland report had started a worldwide conscientization with respect to the sustainability of the ongoing economic processes, first of all as a consequence of the polluting and resources devouring lifestyle of the Northern countries, but also of the deep and widespread poverty in the South. The Rio conference in 1992 cemented the integration of the concerns for the environment and for development into the concept of sustainable development and laid the foundation for a large package of agreed measures.

At the same time a new concept is launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Sustainable Human Development. The addition of the word human is not just a fashionable selling trick, but attempts both to add considerable depth to the slightly worn out concept of development and to provide a basis for new strategic action for development. The Human Development Report (HDR) 1993² states that human development is development of the people (investing in human capacities), for the people (wide and fair distribution) and by the people (giving everyone a chance to participate) and emphasizes in this 1993 Report that "people's participation is becoming the central issue of our time". It adds that "the most efficient form of participation through the market is access to productive and remunerative employment". It admits that "new models of

sustainable human development are needed" and that for combining "economic growth with job opportunities", no comprehensive programme has yet emerged". These considerations lead to a number of practical proposals in the report. For governments in developing countries it is advocated to e.g. "invest generously in basic education, relevant skill and worker training", to "support small-scale enterprises and informal employment mainly through reform of the credit system and fiscal incentives", and to "encourage labour intensive technologies, especially through tax incentives". But at a deeper level institutional responses are necessary to respond to the rising aspirations of the people: "A rapid democratic transition and a strengthening of the institutions of civil society are the only appropriate responses. Among the many specific steps that must accompany such a transition, the two main ones are to decentralize more authority to local governments and to give much greater freedom to people's organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGO's).

"Where decentralization has taken place, it has often been quite successful, encouraging local participation, reducing costs and increasing efficiency". Decentralization also increases the pressure on governments to concentrate on human priority concerns.

"Another major instrument for people's participation is their organization into community groups. Indeed, people's organisations and NGO's have grown dramatically in recent years, offering a powerful means of correcting the features of both markets and governments. They have had a clear impact in four main areas:—advocacy on behalf of the disadvantaged, the empowerment of marginalized groups ... teaching the poorest, and "providing emergency assistance".

With apologies for the extensive quoting I want to emphasize that these are quotes from an official United Nations document. I see in them not completely new ideas, but a change in thinking about development as compared to the dominant discussions on "development" in the larger part of the eighties, without forgetting the lessons which could be drawn from these discussions.

It is this change in thinking about development to which I wanted to draw attention and of which I wanted to ask whether it could signify a change in the direction of some of the insights of Gandhi. In order to avoid misunderstanding, I am not suggesting that this Human Development Report 1993 is a Gandhian document, nor that Sustainable Human Development is a Gandhian concept.

But I am struck by the openness of the text in this Report. I am impressed by the richness as well as the urgency contained in the concept of Sustainable Human Development, and I see some resonance with things I read in and about Gandhi, and therefore I dared to ask this question.

I will try to pick up some points from Gandhi and compare them with some formulations in the Human Development Report 1993.

According to B.N. Ganguli (1973, p. 314), in the 1920s Gandhi responded to a question whether all complicated, power-driven machinery should go: "It might have to go, but I must make one thing clear, *The supreme consideration is man.* The machine should not tend to make the limbs of man atrophied. For instance, I would make intelligent exceptions. Take the case of the Singer sewing machine. It is one of the few useful things ever invented." While this quotation shows, interestingly, Gandhi far from opposed to any technical progress and aware of the benefit technical progress may have for woman, its point for our purpose is the italicized sentence (by me), which could be compared to the following quotation from the Human Development Report 1993 (p. 1): "Development must be woven around people, not people around development, and it should empower individuals rather than dis-empower them". No comment appears necessary on the striking analogy between the two quotations.

Das (1979) draws at several places attention to Gandhi's views on the usefulness, if not necessity, of small local groups: "Rural industry and rural agriculture was to be balanced within groups of small communities involving the maximum mutual balance between (a) local 'needs' and local 'resources' and (b) local 'output' and local 'consumption' (p. 20). "Gandhi visualises a programme of intensive micro-level activities for social welfare. The basic categories of such social action are: 1. The organisation of cooperative groups of small farmers and artisans. 2. The activation of local communities as thinking-planning-acting units." This attention for small groups matches one idea in the Human Development Report 1993 (p. 21); "People can participate as individuals or as groups. As individuals in a democracy they may participate as voters or as political activists or in the market as entrepreneurs or workers. Often, however, *they participate more effectively through group action*, as members of a community organization, perhaps, or a trade union or a political party" (my italics). It is quite possible that upon further scrutiny it would

turn out that the socio-anthropological foundations upon which these interests in group action rest are quite different between Gandhi and the HDR 1993, but at the strategic action level they appear remarkably parallel. In fact in Gandhi's ideal of the construction of a non-violent economy micro-groups play an important part, "...non-violence in the economic sphere can only flourish in a society of micro-groups" (Das, p. 54).

The further analogy between Gandhi and the HDR 1993 with respect to employment as an important objective and labour-intensive production as an important means for development, and with regard to the importance of decentralization of policy making doesn't need to be supported by further quotations.

Where do these commonalities between Gandhi's thinking and the Human Development Report 1993 lead us to? First of all, they show us that the distance between the two ways of thinking, of Gandhi and a reasonably mainstream part of development thinking today, may be a little bit smaller than sometimes thought. The socio-economic perceptions of Gandhi, made amidst the fiercest political and spiritual struggles, do have some meaning for development problems today, and the other way round, there is some development thinking today which could have some sensitivity for these perceptions. Of course, one may consider the fragmented analogies as we saw them as too scattered a basis to justify some dialogue.

Secondly, one does not need to treat these two ways of thinking as static, closed systems of which one could only theoretically determine their "distance", each of them being complete and closed in itself. On the contrary, one can perceive a change in current international development thinking into the direction of Gandhian thinking. On that basis one could envisage an open dialogue, where experiences and perceptions from both sides are undogmatically exchanged and discussed in an attempt to reach a better understanding of human development problems and of ways which allow people to take up these problems. In this way non-Indians may also be further confronted with the very rich historical, as well as the more recent experience of India with development, and thus broaden their horizon accordingly. □

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Notes & References

1. In this essay we have profited considerably from Das's exposition.
2. The fourth in a series of annual Human Development Reports, which contain also a lot of social statistics and a general Human Development Index.

THE RELEVANCE OF GANDHI TODAY

Mewa Ramgobin

A few glimpses of Gandhi's thoughts.

I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country... in whose making they have an effective voice; a India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people... an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony... there shall be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability... women shall enjoy the same rights as men... This is the India of my dreams.

He was, no doubt, proud of his Hindu inheritance. But, he tried to give his Hinduism a kind of universal attire and he included all religions within the fold of Truth. He refused to narrow his cultural inheritance.

Indian Culture, he wrote, is neither Hindu, Islamic nor any other, wholly... In fact it is a fusion of all...

Again he wrote, "I want the cultures of all to be blown around my house as freely as possible... but I refuse to be blown off my feet by any... I refuse to live in anybody's houses as an interloper, a beggar or a slave.

Relating this paper to South Africa, I'd like to suggest that the debates and discourses should be characterised by the "fact" that there should be a viable alternative to the existing mess that ALL South Africans are in. The Gandhian alternative will be to

reject acquiescence in Apartheid. What is the alternative?

Violent confrontation is both unacceptable and unworkable. That we need to transform S.A., without war is a must; we need to preserve the country's cultural diversities, because they contribute to the richness of our land, is another must but above all, all South Africans have to enrich a new national consciousness towards nation building and unity.

It is in this context that Negotiations *IS* a revolutionary option for *ALL* South Africans. Negotiations offers the space for both the dominant and the dominated groups to *liberate themselves* from all those practices that militate against the forging of this national consciousness. Given Gandhi's assertions on love and unity, negotiation is the first logical step. The next step, still on the basis of negotiations is to transform and re-construct our country. Transformation and re-construction will demand an adherence to non-sectarianism if the Gandhian ideal of "Sarvodaya" (Welfare of ALL) is to be realised. In other words, we must continuously struggle with each other, through negotiations, to create the conditions for non-sectarianism, instead of yielding to systems and conditions that will entrench sectarianism.

Sarvodaya is visualised to liberate ALL, to serve ALL. But, this welfare of all cannot materialise without the partnership between the State, para-statal like Universities, local authorities, NGOs and individuals. Sectarianism, no matter by whom it is practised, always militates against the liberation of ALL. We need to be adamant that sectarianism of whatever persuasion does not recognise the dynamics of reality. Recent events in Eastern Europe, in the Middle East, in Yugoslavia and even in Gandhi's India bear testimony to this.

It is a known historical fact that the Rightist sectarian seeks to slow down the historical process. They seek to domesticate time because they believe that they can domesticate people. They are wrong. It can be argued that even the "Leftists" have gone astray—by becoming a sectarian. They allow themselves to fall into a fatalistic position by interpreting reality and history *ONLY* in dialectical terms. How does one, on the eve of the twenty-first century, evaluate the phenomenon of Gandhi? Gandhi, the walking symbol of his ideals, the activist, the leader and mover of masses of people without violence. Who and what was this man? Why do we have to reflect on his relevance to us to-day? He was neither a Rightist nor a Leftist. And, he was neither of these because I believe with Paulo Freire that:

the Rightist... seeks to domesticate time whilst the Leftist considers the future pre-established—a kin of inevitable fate, fortune or destiny... for the Rightist sectarian today linked to the past is something given and immutable; for the Leftist sectarian 'tomorrow' is declared, given and immutable, is inexorably pre-ordained... Thus the Rightist and Leftist are both reactionary because starting from their respective false views of history, both develop forms of action which negate freedom. (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. p. 18).

The fact that one imagines a "well behaved" present and the other a pre-determined future, does not mean that people fold their arms and become mere spectators.

Closing themselves into circles of certainty, from which they cannot escape, these people make their own truth... both types of sectarian treatment of history in an equally proprietary fashion, end up without the people—which is another way of being against them... (Paulo).

I'd like to suggest that Gandhi, the Satyagrahi, the Karma Yogi and the founder of the Sarvodaya movement would challenge and question, as he did, these two anti-people positions.

His relevance exhorts us to make interventions that must become the base for our total transformation and development—leading to the integration of all our peoples. The emotional, psychological integration is a must to weld us into one people, one country and one national unit—whilst simultaneously guarding the cultural diversities that can only enrich our civilization. To achieve this there has to be action. And, this action must be in the service of our country as our primary faith. It must become a religion no matter what community or race we belong to. Gandhi would have noticed, if he were among us to-day, that we are socialized into different symbols of disunity by the coercive powers of Apartheid. But, as a Satyagrahi he would have begun the correctional process with toleration, trust, dignity and forbearance. All of these are components of the ethic of all faiths. But, above all I am certain, Gandhi would have insisted or ensured that we rupture ourselves from the ethos of racial domination of the dominant culture on the one hand and that he would have also insisted on us tearing ourselves away from our own parochial and sectional tendencies that militate against our liberation, development and nation-building.

Of course, it will be pretentious to say that Gandhi's Sarvodaya movement has accomplished all its ideals in India. And, it will be romanticism to believe that the ideals of the "Welfare of all" will

be accomplished in this or that generation. But, what we must seek to do as non-sectarians is to enter into dialogue with all, and especially with the disadvantaged, suffering masses of our people. It is against this backdrop that I maintain that negotiations is a revolutionary option—if not the only option. It is a critical step towards addressing central themes and concerns in regard to the needs satisfaction of millions of oppressed and exploited people and also a major leap to re-humanise our society. Negotiations make it possible for us, the oppressed and disadvantaged, to vigorously struggle to restore our own affronted humanity, but it also reminds us of another task. We have to ensure that our past and current rulers, too, will recover their own lost humanity. Indeed, this is our historical task.

There are some amongst us, the disadvantaged group, who believe that we could take a somewhat easy way out. To go for the bloody showdown between white and black or alternatively go for the pure Marxist position whereby change is visualised to come through a particular kind of historical process. Negotiations exclude both these options. And, it is inherent in the nature of the current negotiations, especially with the recent pronouncements of the leadership of the ANC, that the democratic forces will remain constantly vigilant in seeing to it that in the pursuit of our liberation, the current oppressed will not become the future “oppressors” of those who currently oppress. Negotiations as part of a process is the first major step to liberate both the oppressed and the oppressor—thus making the vision that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, a lived experience.

But for South Africa to belong to all who live in it there must be certain demands that have to be met. Pre-eminent among these demands are:—

1. South Africans will have to see to it that ecclesiastical power is not conjoined with political power, because when this happens a kind of selfish, self-righteousness can develop. This is seen in many parts of the world today.
2. We have to recognise that for as long as *WE* remain part of a whole of nature, then we indeed admit an eternal inseparability of our cultural expressions from the socio-political, economic contradictions.
3. That in recognising both the fullness and the foulness in each other, we will need a covenant to see ourselves through the eyes of each other.

In short, as South Africans, our capacity to transvalue must be used above all other considerations of party, political power. This must logically lead to a larger nationalism that will have to rise above the differences of religion, creed, colour and tribe.

Gandhi rejected the "debris of caste and creed". He abhorred injustice. But, he did not hesitate to admonish his fellow countrymen and women, that he "did not want India to rise on the ruins of other nations". It will be worth our while to ponder, reflect and ask ourselves whether many South Africans today, those with some, special tendencies—are indeed not seeking to secure their own short-sighted goals in preference to the national interests. And, the national interest does not only devolve around an acceptable constitutional dispensation or an agreeable Bill of Rights.

He believed that "a semi-starved nation, can neither have religion, nor art, nor organisation... whatever can be useful to starving millions is beautiful to my mind... let us give to-day first the vital things of life and the graces and ornaments of life will follow." His mission in life, he said, "was to wipe every tear from every eye." Today in our country the vast difference between those who have and our poverty stricken masses is due to racially determined exploitation and the capitalist industrial civilization as symbolised by the Big Machine. Gandhi, I believe was not against the use of machinery as such. And, by deduction it can be postulated that if the use of machinery absorbed labour and did not create fresh or new unemployment, it was good. But, what we need to do is to evaluate the machine, and also evaluate the use of land in relation to human resources and human needs in our country. Even if we were to enjoy a six per cent growth rate in South Africa how long will it take, given all other factors, to liberate our people from hunger and disease, poverty and ignorance, loneliness and violence?

This, then has a logical sequel. Our freedom from Apartheid domination and shackles must be followed by our next liberation—from the bondage of homelessness, poverty, hate, avarice and accumulation. The needs of our people are staring us in our faces. It does not take a genius to know nor do they require scientific researchers to establish that there can be no liberation, let alone transformation and reconciliation without us engaging in the resolution of these needs.

Before a paralysis of sorts sets in, as is seen in several parts of Africa and the disadvantaged world,

- we have to begin the processes to conserve soil and add to it;
- we have to consume water and add to it;
- we have to protect our flora and fauna as part of our cultural heritage;
- we have to provide safe, unpolluted water;
- we have to fight, with success, the industrial pollution of our environment;
- we have to provide adequate housing and proper sanitation;
- we have to organize refuse disposal and convert refuse to good use for fertilizer, compost and even power;
- we have to examine the use of land with the possibilities of introducing agricultural co-operation—not on the basis of cartels and boards, but related to needs fulfilment of dispossessed people;
- we have to introduce health services and health education;
- we have to fight the oppression of women and organize our society against child and drug abuse;
- we have to address the growth and development of our rural areas, with the lessening of our peoples' dependence on the industrial sectors;
- we have to create the conditions of good health, mental and physical, instead of depending on the instruments of fighting social diseases;
- we have to introduce free debate and discussions and a new revolutionary ethic for all South Africans.

This to my mind is the greatest relevance of Gandhi to-day for our country. Our transition to a global society is one thing. Without fulfilling the needs of our people no liberation, to my mind, is possible. But, if political power is either seized through the barrels of guns or shared through negotiations then these programs, amongst a host of others, will have to be engaged in, or else that political power howsoever gained will be meaningless to the majority of South Africans.

Lastly, it is my hope that the University community in South Africa will deem it necessary to introduce "Gandhian Studies" in its departments of social science, humanities, philosophy and peace studies. The challenges, conflicts and impending conflagrations in our country compel me to dwell on this challenge. □

GANDHI: THE FORCE OF TRUTH

Imma Moscaritolo

The message of the Mahatma is more than ever relevant, as it clearly emerged in a convention held at the "Sapienza" (University of Rome). The spell of spirituality.

"The centenary of Gandhi's arrival in South Africa: relevance of his teaching"; this was the title of the convention held on Nov. 30 1993 at the University of Rome "La Sapienza". The meeting, attended by an absorbed gathering of young people, included among speakers Sen. Giulio Orlando, Chairman of the Italian Institute for Asia; Prof. Donatella Dolcini, lecturer of Hindi language and Literature at the Milan State University; Hon. Emma Bonino, Secretary of the Radical Party; Pier Luigi Chiaretti, Editor of the monthly publication of the University, *Proteo*; H.E. Kuldip Sahdev, Ambassador of India to Italy.

Sen. Orlando gave the opening talk, emphasizing the significance which Gandhi stay in South Africa had for him and for the creation of the two pillars of his political and moral activity: Satyagraha and *Ahimsa*. The relevance of the Mahatma's teaching is precisely this: "I have nothing new to teach the world", he used to say, "truth and non-violence are old as the hills".

A hundred years later, Gandhian anti-racial teaching has found expression with the fall of apartheid and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Nelson Mandela. And to this effect Orlando quoted "the different human races are like different branches of the same tree, once the common parent trunk is acknowledged, from which we all have originated, we understand

the basic unit of the human family and there then is no place for hatred and damaging counter positions”.

The speech of the Chairman of the Italian Institute for Asia in a concise but clear manner explained nearly all aspects—political, religious, moral and civil—which characterized the Mahatma’s long life.

The seminar, after the impassioned inauguration by Sen. Orlando, continued with Prof. Dolcini’s talk. She presented an authentic ascent of Gandhi’s life and thought.

Hon. Bonino’s talk, instead, tried to show the extent of success in re—living Gandhian teaching in politics today. The main points of his speech were two: one relating to upstaging the old Machiavellian motto “the end justifies the means” and the other concerning civil disobedience.

The talk of the University magazine’s editor, Pier Luigi Chiaretti was undoubtedly very touching. His speech was brief but full of meaning because it was made by a young student who was approaching Gandhi for the first time in a different way. The Mahatma appeared in Chiaretti’s eyes not as a mythical hero but as a model to emulate, being full of gentleness and simplicity. And it is precisely this simplicity and dignity, love and a return to primitive life which should be the inspiration of the younger generation.

The talk was concluded by the Indian Ambassador to Italy, Kuldip Sahdev, who once again emphasized the importance the trip to South Africa had for Gandhi. It’s here, in fact, that Gandhi became a leader because he understood the need to fight the British Government. Thus the struggle for liberation of his country started, with non-violent methods like fasting, non-corporation and civil disobedience.

Today Gandhian teaching should be more active than ever because in a world without values like ours, Yugoslavia is the typical example of what can happen if the Mahatma’s teachings are not put into practice. □

GANDHI'S SECULARISM RECONSIDERED

Antony Copley

The confrontation in Ayodhya has thrown into relief an issue which bedevilled the history of the Indian nationalist movement, the relationship between Religion and Politics, and, more darkly, the seemingly inevitable concomitant relationship with Communalism. The only safeguard against this wretched deterioration in Indian political life is an Indian version of secularism. Its apparent weakness in withstanding the recrudescence of communalism over the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi dispute forces its reconsideration, a historical enquiry that takes us back to its Congress progenitors, Gandhi and Nehru, and to the story of a counter ideology of the Hindu fundamentalists. What was Gandhi's place in this story, and was his version of secularism an answer to communalism and fundamentalism?

Statement of the Issues

Clearly at the heart of the matter lies a question of the role that religion should play in modern society. The evident all pervasive role that religion continues to play in Indian society and culture is in fairly marked contrast to that in the far more secularised societies of Europe and America. This creates as almost impossible choice between seeking to preserve and cherish this religious way of life in India or working for a more secularised culture in a more

modernised India. This choice inevitably colours the debate on secularism. Some will go along with an Indian version of Secularism which seeks to protect the role of religion in Indian life: others believe that the only way forward is a diminution of its influence, a separation certainly of religion from politics, and the creation, through a more prosperous society, of a more secular culture. It seems a pretty tall order for the foreseeable future to imagine any fundamental shift in the religious character of Indian life. Despite the emergence in recent decades of a much larger middle class, with its modern and secular outlook, it makes more sense to work within the parameters of religion continuing to play a major part in Indian life, and hence politics. There would be many who doubt, if India is to be true to its culture, it could be otherwise. All commentaries on secularism in India have to be measured against this expectation.

Praful Bidwai's secularist critique¹ has so to be seen, though his is a not unpersuasive attempt to differentiate between an acceptable form of interaction between religion and politics and its perversion in communalism. 'Religion has never been', he asserts, 'a politically integrative force or an adequate criterion for the definition of national identity in the modern period... Religion has been at the root of brokenness (fragmentation) of society'. Hinduism was quite unsuited for any political role in a modern society: 'there is no way in which Hinduism itself, brittle and multi-layered, can be forged into the foundation for any pretension to modernism, pluralism, or democracy.' According to his definition of the 'modern', religion, quite simply, can play no part in modern democratic politics: 'modern society and politics are founded on an altogether different premise, a human centred one pertaining to the here and now, a universe marked by material definitions, interests and activities.... Secular democratic politics is nothing if not the desacralisation of the spaces of public activity and the domain of the polls.' But he then plays off one form of dialogue between religion and modern politics against another; 'a benign, soft one where religion through an internal process of questioning aspires to develop approximations to secular ideals of justice, equality and humanist universalism' (and surely here he had Gandhi in mind though he does not say so), and a second, 'a clash, often violent, between religion and modern politics deriving from the former's effort at intruding into and appropriating the domain of the latter. This form of interaction, aggressive, revanchist, hate-driven, parochial, and usually destructive is what could be called

a last ditch battle by religion for the temporal world.' This is communalism. The first is inclusive, introvert, aware of injustice and the need for healing; the second, exclusive, looking inward and backward, 'fuelled by prejudice, insecurity and hatred.' He concludes with a blistering attack on the Hindu fundamentalist position: 'the forced attempt to forge a Semitic, monolithic, chosen people, identity for Hindus based on a perverted, sexist, and iniquitous version of the great tradition (promoted at the expense of folk or little traditions) stands in sharp contrast to the enlightened effort at founding a modern social rationale for religion, as, say, in Vivekananda.'

Gandhi, Religion, Politics

Gandhi's challenge lay in introducing his religious values into Indian nationalist politics without this drift into communalism and their seeming connection in his political career continues to pose the most morally disquieting question for historians. There is the disturbing paradox that a national leader who was wholly opposed to all forms of communalism and desperately opposed to the partition may have unwittingly contributed to both. Indian nationalists were confronted with the conundrum of how to relate nationalism, essentially a western concept, though not necessarily a secular one—think of the writings of Mazzini—to an Indian society and culture which was pluralistic and religious and one in which the spheres of society and politics had traditionally been kept apart.

An overriding temptation for the nationalists in the early phase of the nationalist movement, themselves seen as an alienated minority elite, in their quest for a new national identity, was to cut the gordian knot and bring religion and politics together. The way through to a more popular expression of political nationalism lay in appealing to religious loyalties. Such was the choice of Dayanand Saraswati and Tilak; their Hindu revitalization programmes were matched by Muslim, and the result was a horrible warning; in the 1890s there was the first wave of modern communal conflict.

Gandhi was a moral scientist—and here I'll be following the arguments of Bhikhu Parekh²—his was a quest for a new morality for an India in a state of moral crisis; on the one hand, threatened by an industrial, urban secular, western culture and, on the other, weighed down by its own ossified, traditional, culture. Parekh

locates Gandhi in a spectrum of intellectuals from traditionalist to modernising. He draws an interesting and original distinction between the 'critical traditionalist' and the 'critical modernist', the former believing that cultures are autonomous and survival lies in discovering solutions from within, the latter believing that India could gain from taking on broad new ideas from without. If Gandhi rejected both merely traditionalist and modernising approaches, he is seen as closer to the critical traditionalist, to thinkers such as Vivekananda and Aurobindo than to Ram Mohun Roy. Gandhi shared their view that only religion would provide the necessary revitalisation for both social and political change and that the answers lay within Hinduism.

But Gandhi looked to Hinduism for the way it sought answers rather than for any actual set of beliefs; to quote Parekh's paraphrase of this argument: 'Its history was a story of new insights constantly gathered by great spiritual adventurers.'³ Gandhi clearly saw himself as such an adventurer. Religion was to be studied as a science and his life was to be a series of scientific experiments with such religious truths. If Gandhi was wholly at one with Hinduism in believing in the primacy of the spiritual, he was fundamentally to redefine its relationships to worldly affairs. His was a search for a new *yugadharma*, a moral code specific for his own age, and Gandhi believed that the essence of such a moral code lay in a life of service, a love for one's fellow-men.

For Gandhi this led to political action:

in this age, only political sanyasis can fulfil the ideal of sannyasa. No Indian who aspires to follow the way of true religion can afford to remain aloof from politics. In other words, one who aspires to a truly religious life cannot fail to undertake public service as his mission, and we are today so much caught up in the political machine that service of the people is impossible without taking part in politics.⁴

To quote Parekh's interpretation, 'if political life could be spiritualised, it would have a profoundly transformative effect on the rest of society... Political action was therefore the only available path to moksha.'⁵

It is worth observing here that Gandhi was drawing heavily on Christian concepts of social service and the Christians, especially in India, likewise believed in the transforming role of religion in politics, be it the pro-Gandhian beliefs of Charles Andrews, or the illiberal, imperialist rhetoric of the British Israelites, and in this readiness to learn lessons from other religions or cultures,

Gandhi drew closer to the critical modernists.⁶

But here Parekh is curiously blind to how radical a transformation Gandhi sought to work on India. For not only did Gandhi draw religion into politics, he prioritised politics in an entirely revolutionary way and, in the view of Ashis Nandy⁷, in a highly destructive manner. Traditionally many of India's social problems had been settled outside the political arena, by various sub-systems, as he phrases it, by family, religion, community, locality, all guided by distinctive *dharmic* codes. Politics had been a specialist preserve, amoral, dispassionate, ruthless. Gandhi encouraged alternative solutions in the public domain, a high risk strategy that worked in a period of high idealism during the nationalist struggle but fatal thereafter: the consequence is a democratic process log-jammed by the sectarian demands of pressure groups, caste, communal, linguistic, highly divisive, often hopelessly corrupt. May be this overprioritizing of politics is the most negative consequence of Gandhi's leadership, but it remains to investigate another serious charge, that Gandhi's introduction of a religious mode into politics led, however inadvertently, to a heightening of communal awareness and to communal conflict.

Communal Quarrels of the 1920s

There can be no disputing that Gandhi's first large scale non-cooperation movement and all too brief trial of civil disobedience coincided, or was fairly soon followed by, serious outbursts of communal violence. The most serious example of coincidence was that of Malabar,⁸ of succession, the Kohat in N.W.F.P.⁹ Self-evidently, such communal violence betrayed Gandhi's aspiration for an all-India, popular, nationalist movement and his ideals of social harmony and non-violence, but in the volatile and highly experimental world of popular nationalism, intentions were no guarantee of consequences. Gandhi may have been mistaken in latching on to so conservative a cause as Khilafat, but he had successfully brought Hindu and Muslim together in South Africa and here seemed an opportunity to do so again in India, and if this could be seen to be opportunist, then Muslim leaders were equally so in this exploitation of Pan-Islamism. There was also no way of knowing how an all-India appeal would catalyse local politics, though historians are now aware of the outcome: Judith Brown observes, 'as the national movement became entangled with local level politics, local activists and protagonists used and

manipulated the all-India campaign and certainly generated local support but at times also threatened to wreck it'.¹⁰

'Communal violence', according to the analyst of the Kohat riots, 'is caused by tension between communities sustained to such an extent that what in normal times would seem trivial leads to a violent riot'.¹¹ Jawaharlal Nehru attributed communalism to 'too much religiosity'.¹² Judith Brown agrees: 'once religion was thus let loose in politics it became uncontrollable and self-perpetuating: fear and violence bred fear and violence and prominent all-India politicians could not contain it'.¹³ The Khilafat movement gave new powers to local ulemas and, as K.N. Panikkar has shown, if the long-term causes of the rebellion of 1921 in Malabar lay in the economic and social exploitation of a Muslim tenantry by a Hindu landlord class, it was the mistaken but self-interested belief of local Muslim priests that Khilafat was to usher in an Islamic state that led economic protest to deteriorate into communal and the enforced conversions of Hindus. In Kohat it was likewise the ulemas, sensing a decline in their new found influence with the passing of the Khilafat movement, who worked on majority Muslim sentiment and encouraged mob violence against the minority urban Hindu community. Of course it takes two sides to bring communities to this level of antagonism; McGinn concludes that the Kohat riots 'represented a search for power and influence by communalists on either side by creating a stronger identity.'¹⁴

And if heightened religiosity was to blame, then Gandhi's style of leadership and his use of religious symbolism cannot be overlooked: 'part of Gandhi's public image was that of a holy Hindu man, and in places this almost shaded into veneration of him as semi-divine. There were reports of regular Gandhi *puja* (worship). But charismatic appeal was not the foundation for a stable and disciplined political following. Those who venerated him could easily turn to violence and arson.'¹⁵ 'Religiosity' is the refusal to separate religion from politics and social and economic life'.¹⁶ It seems unfair to blame such communal violence on Gandhi's advocacy of economic and social transformation in the name of a religious ideal, of the recreation of Ram Rajya, of the Kingdom of God on earth, but there were connections, and one has to ask, did Gandhi have any answers to these risks from the intrusion of religion into politics?

Gandhi's Solutions

One drastic solution was the fast. Confronted by the worsening communal situation on his release from jail, and in specific response to Kohat, Gandhi embarked on a three-week fast for Hindu-Muslim unity in September 1924, though he admitted this was no solution: 'for the time being I have put away in my cupboard this Hindu-Muslim tangle. This does not mean that I have despaired of a solution. My mind will eternally work at it till I find a solution. But I must confess to you today that I cannot present a workable solution that you will accept.'¹⁷

In the longer term the answer lay in Gandhi's concept of secularism, and as so much of his definition was to underlie that enshrined in the Constitution, this must be explored.

Firstly, what did he mean by religion?

It is not the Hindu religion, which I certainly prize above all other religions, but the religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which even purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself, known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself.¹⁸

Parekh reaches out to define the inclusivism of Gandhi's position: 'for Gandhi, Indian civilisation was not only plural but pluralist, that is committed to plurality as a desirable end'.¹⁹ Intolerance, in Gandhi's belief, did irreparable harm to one's own religious understanding. No religion contained all of the truth: all religions were a way of approaching the truth: only religious tolerance would guarantee that all of the truth would be found: It was a view that drew its inspiration less from high culture, though Gandhi believed that Hinduism itself 'included all that he knew to be best in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism',²⁰ more from India's folk culture, where he witnessed Indians of all communities ready to share in each other's cultural and religious life. Gandhi's inclusivist version of religious tolerance became substantially India's version of secularism.

Secularism and the Constitution

Difficulties lie in the way of comprehending the Indian version of secularism should one seek to foist on India expectations that

the State should keep its distance from religion or should encourage secular values. As some Indians, including Nehru, did attempt to do just that—there are clauses in the Constitution which seek to limit the intervention of the State in religious institutions—there is clearly room for confusion. In fact, independent India inherited an ancient tradition that the function of rulers was to protect *dharma*, one that was passed onto it by both the East India Company and the Raj through their policy of religious neutrality. Clearly there was scope for ambiguity. How could the State itself avoid, with this mandate, taking on a religious coloration, and how could it avoid favouring the religion of its choice, the Company and Raj, Christianity, Independent India, Hinduism? The way out for Independent India is, of course, a demonstrative protection of the minorities.

Donald Eugene Smith's is probably as good a description of Indian secularism as we are likely to get: 'To most Indians *secular* means non-communal or non-sectarian, but it does not mean non-religious. For most, the basis of the secular state is not a 'wall of separation' between state and religion, but rather the 'no-preference doctrine' 'which requires only that no special privileges be granted to any one religion.'²⁴ Obviously, much of this was underpinned by real-politik: Gandhi recognised the need to placate the Muslims and counter Jinnah's two-nation theory; Nehru saw how essential such a secularism was if Kashmiri Muslims were to see themselves as citizens of independent India.

Another major concession, and one in clear breach of any modern definition of secularism, was the retention of Muslim personal law. Nehru agonized, but gave way. May be this alone persuaded the now much diminished and very frightened Muslim minority that India remained dar-ul-islam rather than dar-ul-harb, a state in which, according to the ulemas, Muslims could practise their faith. It was an attempt to weaken that concession in the Shah Bano affair that put Muslims on their guard, provoked Hindu fundamentalist response, and was to put the Ayodhya dispute in the forefront of Indian politics.

Attitudes of the Hindu Communalists

The challenge to the Gandhi-Nehru secular state comes from the right wing of the Hindu majority community. The charge is simple and it is easy to see how it comes about: they brand it as pseudo-secularism (reference to Muslim personal law)

and minorityism. It encourages ugly communal abuse against the Muslims, inspired largely by irrational demographic fears. Sarvepalli Gopal argues that it is up to the Hindu majority to set a secular example, and, if so, clearly this fundamentalist leadership is betraying its historic task.²² But the problem goes back a long way and was in the forefront of the thinking of the critical traditionalists: how could you fashion a strong Indian state which did not have a Hindu identity? Parekh argues their greater sense of political realism: 'the themes of conflict, statecraft, autonomy of political morality, political realism, courage, will-power and physical strength, which were all curiously absent in the writings of the modernists and critical modernists, dominated the thought of the critical traditionalists.'²³ Here Gandhi, with his emphasis on a decentralised, even village-based state, compares poorly. He is seen as lacking a sense of how strong the state needs to be if it is to engineer economic and social modernisation. The critical traditionalists were well aware, if Hinduism was to be the backbone of the new state, it would have to absorb profound economic and social reform. Did the critical traditionalists have any doubts that Hinduism, an essentially amorphous faith, could take on such a role without betraying its inner nature? Ashis Nandy has argued that Hindu culture is essentially feminine, and cannot take on these aggressive masculine roles and remain true to itself.²⁴ It simply was not a faith which lends itself to such state formation. Besides, such a programme would inevitably alienate the minorities. No such doubts were to deter the Hindu fundamentalists, though we might be right to argue that theirs' was an over-simplification and distortion of the views of the critical traditionalists, and certainly mere traditionalism also informs this rhetoric.

Initiators of such a nationalism were the Hindu Mahasabha—its origins lay in a number of regional associations but its first all-India meeting was in 1915—and the RSS, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a para-military organisation, a kind of Hindu home-guard, set up in 1925. The former sought a distinctive political role, based on an appeal to the Hindu majority, but one which a wing of the Congress party were to frustrate through its own conscious appeal to the same constituency. The founder of the RSS, Keshav Hedgewar, an Andhra Brahmin, initially saw his volunteers as a force for protecting those Hindus at risk from communal violence. But his longer-term aim was the physical (quite literally) and cultural rejuvenation of the Hindus, with an emphasis on hierarchy and discipline, and a basic distrust, even

alienation, from the party-political and democratic process. From the very beginning, there were contradictory tendencies in the Indian right, a readiness to become involved in the necessary give and take of political life, and an almost Olympian distaste for such politics.²⁵ The Congress party's response, concerned over its acquiring any overt Hindu communal identity, was to forbid joint membership of the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha, and persist in its bid for Muslim support. Yet every move Congress made to woo the minorities further alienated the Hindu fundamentalists. Notoriously N.V. Godse, Gandhi's assassin, was a member of the Hindu Mahasabha and a former member of the RSS, though subsequent investigation was to show that the RSS had played no part in his conspiracy. Gandhi had done everything possible to stave off partition. Even afterwards, on the eve of his murder, some Christian 'friends' in Pakistan, seeking some solution to the division of financial assets between the successor states.²⁶ Such moves merely further identified him as an appeaser of Muslims and Pakistan.

Gandhi fell victim of Hindu-Muslim communalism. No one would argue that one individual can stem the tide of powerful social forces and Gandhi's heroic stand against the forces of communalism in his society was unable in the end to prevent the partition of the sub-continent and its accompanying communal holocaust. Yet Gandhi never lost faith in reason and humanity. Much of Gandhi's optimism lay in his awareness of India's folk culture, that at this popular level members of all communities shared in each other's religious and cultural lives: the common man's sense of a shared community would transcend narrow sectarian interests. This reflects the reality of Indian life and can be held in the balance against those periodic confrontations, often the consequence of gravely irresponsible exploitation of human ignorance and fear by communal politicians. Otherwise, Gandhi saw the answer in his own version of secularism, a sharing of religions, a quest for some transcendent truth. This should be differentiated from the Hindu doctrine of inclusivism, one that emphasises Hinduism's own capacity for tolerance, but one that has been criticised for a failure to engage in any real dialogue with other faiths.²⁷ On the contrary, Gandhi was profoundly influenced by other religions and was always seeking insights from other traditions. Here he was at one with another of India's great religious enquirers, Emperor Akbar. Gandhi's concept of religious toleration was to be substantially incorporated into the India's constitution,

and it is this version of secularism which still holds out the best possibility, though it requires total commitment, of lessening the furies of communalism. □

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21. *Ibid.*, p. 381.
22. He makes the point in his introduction though this was also Nehru's position.
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GANDHI—COMING BACK FROM WEST TO EAST

Detlef Kantowsky

I wish to share some personal thoughts on the relevance of Gandhi today, by briefly discussing the following five questions:

- (i) Does it make sense to distinguish East and West when talking about Gandhi?
- (ii) Did Gandhi ever go to the West or, to put the question in a more provocative manner, was he probably a 'Westerner'?
- (iii) How was Gandhi received in the East, what was India's reaction to his message?
- (iv) What are the reasons for his recent re-discovery in the West?
- (v) How to explain the strange fact that Gandhi needs obviously the blessings of the West before he will be reconsidered seriously in contemporary India?

I think we need not discuss in great detail the different cosmologies that characterize the Hindu-Buddhist and the Christian-Protestant answers of man to the riddles of his existence as a unique living being—unique in the sense that he has developed the faculty of symbolic communications through language, and of sharing and storing of knowledge via texts.

The Western man thinks in linear concepts of progress and in dualistic dichotomies of good and bad, of man versus nature, and of mind versus matter. He has, during the last four hundred years, developed this dualistic world-view into a system of 'science',

i.e. an explanation of so-called 'reality' according to certain sense data matched with a set of mental formations called 'theories'. This kind of Western objectivity is exactly what Buddhists call 'anubodha'—knowing accordingly, dependent knowledge. 'Objective Science'—thinking in terms of object and subject is another Western dichotomy—is for *homo faber* the tool with which his mind tries to explain and manipulate matter. Thus only those aspects of reality matter to him which can answer accordingly, i.e. according to his dualistic world-view of man against nature. To be or not to be is for him the main question. Hence he cannot imagine a thought without a thinker nor a deed without a doer. Brought up in the boxes of rectangular thinking in alternatives of 'yes' or 'no', he has extreme difficulties in even vaguely grasping the symbols of a circular world-view of conditioned genesis in which every now is understood as a flux of momentary change in an endless stream of becoming and re-becoming.

If we look at our surroundings, this fundamental difference becomes obvious. Compare, for instance, for rectangular patterns in Europe, a necessary consequence of man conquering nature more 'effectively', with the circular structures by which farmers in South Asia try to fit themselves into a given natural environment. To keep all life going and not to make only man's industry grow is the rationale of their subsistence economy. The full moon does not challenge them to rocket out of their habitation but leads every month right back into the meditative context of life.

The Western man splits material reality into particles so that it can be fed into computer machines with a rigid binary logic. The Eastern man tries to overcome his thought-provoked separation from the cosmic whole through training of mindfulness so that he begins to realize the liberating truth of *tat twam asi*.

The term 'Sarvodaya' was coined by Gandhi when he presented to his compatriots in South Africa in 1908 a free translation of selections from John Ruskin's *Unto this Last*. In his autobiography, he describes the decisive influence this anthology of four essays, first published in the *British Cornhill Magazine* in 1860, on the 'First Principles of Political Economy', had on his life from the day when he read them on a train journey in 1903: "The book was impossible to lay aside. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours' journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book. I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it 'Sarvodaya' (the welfare of all)".¹

When Gandhi started a settlement of about 1,100 acres in the vicinity of Johannesburg in 1910, he named it 'Tolstoy Farm', thereby showing his humble respect for the grand old man in Yasnaya Polyana who lived a life of voluntary simplicity among his former serfs. "Next to the late Rajchandra," Gandhi wrote in *Young India* in 1921, "Tolstoy is one of the three moderns who have exerted the greatest spiritual influence on my life, the third being Ruskin."²

In the appendices to his dialogue on *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi recommended twenty titles for his readers' perusal "to follow up the study of the foregoing". Among them are, of course, two books by Ruskin and Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, but the first six books listed are books by Leo Tolstoy, with whom Gandhi exchanged several letters during 1909–1910 to inform him about the Movement and his new farm in South Africa.

Was Gandhi only the medium through which the thoughts of Western thinkers—Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau—were fed into the minds of the Indian Congress? And what about his ethic of 'bread labour' and rigid punctuality, a lifestyle under the dictatorship of a huge pocket-watch attached to a *dhoti*?

There have indeed been several attempts to identify Gandhi as a Westerner. In a seminar on Max Weber, for instance, sponsored by the Ford Foundation and held at the National Institute of Community Development in Hyderabad in 1966, the Indian participants—mostly social scientists—were led to ask themselves whether there were "strains of belief within the Hindu belief system which under favourable conditions could lead to the savings-productive investment-income chain reaction, as there were in the Judeo-Christian belief system?"³ Gandhi was depicted as 'a hard-working ascetic' who seemed to "coincide exactly with the Weberian notion of the ascetic Protestant."⁴

Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph went even a step further. In their study entitled "Political Development in India", they compared Gandhi with Benjamin Franklin and juxtaposed their daily schedule.⁵ The Chicago School—on whose decisive influence I shall come in the last part of my paper—had finally discovered in India a functional equivalent to Protestant asceticism. The 'modernity of tradition' had been proved and a Western development theory of growth had stood its universal test.

I think we need not waste much time to prove the fallacy of these Eurocentric interpretations. Sarvodaya—the welfare of all—was for Gandhi an altruistic ethic of self-realization. Truth

(Satya) and Freedom (Swaraj) as the ultimate aims of one's self-realization can only grow in an atmosphere of non-violence (*ahimsa*). Such an atmosphere will prevail only in a society where an equal share is given 'even unto this last'. Each individual must therefore work for 'the welfare of all'. This was Gandhi's simple explanation of the concept of Sarvodaya, and the 'constructive programme' was the instrument with 'which he tried to link his own self-realization to that of the weaker sections of the sub-continent in particular.'⁶

To quieten a revolutionary thinker, a society can either shoot him or enshrine him as a holy man. India reacted to Gandhi in both ways. His universal concept for the self-realization of man through non-violent actions in the search for truth had been integrated by and into the Congress Movement in such a way that it seemed to have served its purpose when national independence was achieved. Only then did Gandhi realize that he had been misled by his hopes. At the end of his life he had to confess: "In placing civil disobedience before constructive work I was wrong. I feared that I should estrange co-workers and so carried on with imperfect Ahimsa."⁷

During his last days Gandhi made various attempts to change the direction of political thinking and bargaining. On 27 January 1948 he wrote: "The Congress has won political freedom, but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom. These freedoms are harder than the political, if only because they are constructive, less exciting and not spectacular."⁸

Two days later, Gandhi drafted a new constitution for the Indian National Congress. Being his last piece of writing, prepared one day before his assassination, it was later taken as his "Last Will and Testament." In it Gandhi repeated that "the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e. as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns." The All India Congress Committee is therefore advised "to disband the existing Congress organization and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh," or voluntary organization of Servants of the People.⁹

Gandhi then sketches a system of decentralized government, with the village as its main working unit. For the workers of the proposed 'Lok Sevak Sangh', Gandhi then formulated ten basic principles and guidelines for action which can be seen as a kind

of shorthand of the earlier Constructive Programme.

As we know, these proposals, which aimed at a social and cultural revolution to get rid of the "rotten boroughs leading to corruption and creation of institutions, popular and democratic only in name,"¹⁰ were held to be 'utopian' by Jawaharlal Nehru and his colleagues in the Congress and the Constituent Assembly. They feared that the power vacuum created by a dissolution of the Congress structure might lead to a civil war and a Balkanisation of the subcontinent. Moreover, they believed that one could no longer potter around with village crafts and home industries in the middle of the twentieth century. The India of their dreams needed a central power and planning authority to carry out the ambitious development projects destined to raise the economy to the standards of the modern world.

According to Nehru, the Congress had never considered the Gandhian view of society as exemplified in his *Hind Swaraj*, "much less adopted it."¹¹ Great as Gandhi's influence had been, he had not succeeded in convincing his own party of his view of how Indians should live and govern themselves. It was not a spinning wheel but steel mills, not an oceanic circle of autonomous village panchayats but the Central Planning Commission in New Delhi which became India's true symbols after independence. Harold Laski and the influence of his London School of Economics had overruled both the teachings of Ruskin and Tolstoy and Gandhi's practical attempt at an alternative explanation and solution of India's problems. An economic theory of growth based on an unshakable belief in the universal validity of its modernization paradigm had won India and the socio-cultural potential of its villages had, at least for the moment, lost.

It has, however, taken only two Development Decades for the Western paradigm of development to prove its invalidity in the newly independent countries of the Third World. The main elements of this paradigm are the emphasis on economic growth, capital-intensive technology, and centralized planning. Underdevelopment, according to this paradigm, is mainly the result of internal factors such as traditional ways of thinking, an inefficient bureaucracy, outdated land tenure systems, castebound immobility, and the deep-rooted rural bias of the population.

My generation was trained in the techniques of creating a 'revolution of rising expectations' aimed at transforming a subsistence economy into a modern market economy with a free flow of cash crops and ready-made goods. We laughed when we were

told the story of a cobbler who, after getting handsome *bakhsheesh* from a foreigner, takes to rest for a few days, since the additional and rather unexpected income is more than sufficient to keep him going. This was the kind of traditional, backward, non-profit oriented mentality and attitude towards work that simply had to be overcome. Working purely to satisfy one's limited needs would get society nowhere. Where, then, did we want it to go?

When we look back, it seems rather strange that this question was not asked seriously enough during the 1950s and the 1960s. A naive belief of progress as a self-justifying process led us into the 'backward regions' with missionary zeal. Western man was so proud of his obvious material achievements measured in terms of urbanisation, energy consumption, and 'auto'-mobility, that nobody felt inclined to listen to those few who were asking about the ultimate cost. We were proud of the doubling of the life-expectancy of children in the West and tried not to take any notice of the modern killing capacities that we developed simultaneously.

Does the average European citizen know, for instance, that the 60,000 atomic missiles and bombs that have by now been piled up in the bunkers of the industrialized societies amount to an average of three tons of conventional explosives per world-citizen? Does he realize what it means that the defence budget of one Super Power alone, namely, the United States, has been raised to 178 billion dollars for 1981 and to 222 billion dollars for 1982?¹² Most probably not. So far the outward glamour and glitter of an iron cage of consumerism has successfully supported his illusory belief that he lives in a golden age of affluence. And this is so despite the fact that we now have the Global 2000 Report to the President, the latest of many alarming bulletins of what is ahead. It states that by the time today's 10-year-olds are thirty, there will be less water available, less fertile land, less clean air, less wilderness. One-fifth of the species with whom we now co-inhabit this planet will probably be extinct. There will be less natural diversity, less leeway for waste and conflict, and the gap between the affluent and the hungry is expected to widen.¹³

The corresponding figures of self-destruction and despair are equally appalling. In West Germany, for instance, everyday 10 old people aged sixty and above commit suicide. In 1978 alone, nearly 14,000 West German youths attempted to commit suicide, and nearly 600 pupils, mostly from high schools, killed themselves in the same one year.¹⁴

These few data from our anomic 'brave new world' should

suffice. They are certainly not new to our readers. But they certainly strengthen my firm conviction that a culture based on individual competition and material achievement has reached the point of self-destruction. Accumulation of technical fitness to successfully compete with others—the evolutionary principle that brought a Western lifestyle of innerworldly asceticism and economic rationalism to world dominance during the last 400 years—has begun to turn against the human species as such. If it wants to survive the Occident—the root of that Latin word literally means “to sink, to fall, to get lost”—needs indeed a new Orientation.

More and more concerned groups, and especially the young generation have become aware of the limits of growth and are beginning to see the world around us as a closed system in which the so-called development of the North and the underdevelopment of the South are mutually dependent. These deformed relationships, of which many of us are well aware, though only on an abstract and theoretical level, can be illustrated as follows: “If the world were a global village of 100 people, 6 of them would be Americans. These 6 would have over a third of the village’s income, and the other 94 would subsist on the other two-thirds. How would the wealthy 6 live ‘in peace’ with their neighbours? Surely they would be driven to arm themselves against the other 94—perhaps even to spend, as Americans do, about twice as much per person on military defence as the total income of two-thirds of the villagers”.¹⁵

It is this general context of new value orientations and the quest for human survival that the rediscovery of Gandhi’s message in the West has to be seen. In contrast to the late 1960s when redress of all societal evils was sought in a total revolution of the whole system, what we now see is the rediscovery of the individual. ‘Voluntary simplicity’ has become a force that is backed by a major shift in public opinion.

The phrase ‘voluntary simplicity’ itself stems from an article that Richard Gregg published in the *Viswa Bharati Quarterly* as far back as August 1936. Greatly influenced by the writings of Ruskin and the teachings of Gandhi he had argued that the way to master the increasing complexity of modern life is not through still more complexity. Instead, we need to “turn inward to that which unifies all—not the intellect but the spirit—and then to devise and put into operation new forms and modes of economic and social life.”¹⁶ The will to do without can counterbalance the forces of greed and competition that perpetuate our destructive economic system.

This broad undercurrent of alternative groups and networks in the West should not be mixed up with the 'appropriate technology' approach that was developed as a by-product of mainstream thinking in terms of economic growth during the last few years. Basically it is nothing more than a piece of technocratic advice but not an alternative to the dominant forces. Its concepts and tools will remain sterile as long as they are developed from within the prevailing system.

The Sarvodaya concept differs totally from this kind of 'techno-economic' alternative. For Gandhi, village reconstruction and work for the welfare of all were not appropriate and timely techniques to save the Indian state machinery but means of achieving Truth (Satya) and Freedom (Swaraj) as the ultimate aims of self-realization. He firmly believed that the village community and village economy were the only units which would enable the individual, with all his human deficiencies, to work both for his own self-realization and that of his neighbours. He knew only too well the bureaucratic structures that are found to arise if 'need satisfaction' is planned and administered by a staff of development experts. Thus he did not strive for equal opportunities on the abstract level of per capita income; instead, he relied on the functional diversity and cultural heterogeneity of the Indian subcontinent. Its rural inhabitants would know best how to adjust to the potential of an area if only they were allowed to think and act on their own behalf.

Western alternatives are based on what is needed to keep those already living below the poverty line from starving. While Sarvodaya defines a maximum necessary for the well-being of all, development technocrats measure the minimum energy input required to keep individual labour intact and craving for material acquisitions growing. This juxtaposition shows that development concept under Sarvodaya does indeed offer an alternative. It starts with a new definition of aims, one which is made possible by reference to a value system that differs fundamentally from the world-view which governs modern thinking.

When discussing my studies on Sarvodaya with an Indian friend, Dr. D.C. Wadhwa from the Gokhale Institute, who had worked in the Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement for several years, he commented sceptically: "I think that the cancer of Western economic development has grown to such a magnitude that one will have to die with it now. Its secondaries have reached each and every part of our body and therefore it is impossible to escape

the inevitable. Nothing else is now acceptable".

It was this kind of defeatism which Ivan Illich had in mind when he expressed his concern that it was the Western scholars who were coming up with Gandhian ideas and concepts. When in India in winter 1978 he is reported to have said that he felt it would be a tragedy if India had to 're-import' Gandhi from the West.¹⁷ Yet the fact is that most Indian scholars no longer consider a Gandhian approach 'feasible' for their country.¹⁸ At the same time, however, they use the jargon of the dependencia-theory without realizing that Gandhi had described the international dialectics of industrial development long before the model of centre versus periphery was introduced. As early as 1928 he had pleaded: "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 millions took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts."¹⁹ Gandhi was, moreover, absolutely certain that it made no difference how the forces of production were organized. Capitalism or socialism were for him surface phenomena that had no significant influence on the destructive aggressiveness of industrialism as such. For an Indian farmer it indeed makes no difference today who tries to exploit him; no matter whether it is Russian state socialism or Western private capital, the terms of exchange are against him in both cases. In 1940 Gandhi had anticipated these basic similarities and warned his countrymen: "Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them."²⁰

We have to accept that, for the time being, a wholehearted Gandhian approach to South Asia's problems is missing in the region. Despite the many official declarations of good intent and righteousness, things are allowed, or even planned, to move in other directions, and the demonstration and penetration effects of the First World's systems are to be felt everywhere, both on the material level and in the mental make-up. No matter how far we travel, Coca Cola has been there before, even in Peking.

It is quite obvious that 'development', the modern theodicy, has been accepted by India's Westernized elite and their social scientists. A universal development concept helps to explain their own well-being and relative affluence and leaves a hopeful

perspective even for those who are still backward or 'behind schedule'. The fortunate is seldom satisfied with the fact of being fortunate," said Max Weber. "Beyond this he needs to know that he has a *right* to his good fortune. He wants to be convinced that he 'deserves' it, and above all, that he deserves it in comparison with others.... Good fortune thus wants to be legitimate fortune."²¹

An evolutionist view of 'modernization and development' thus serves a double purpose. Not only does it legitimize the relative affluence of the 'functional elites' in a 'developing' society; it suggests, moreover, that the Third World can 'take off' and even 'catch up' if only it follows the path of the First World. It remains to be seen whether this modern form of theodicy is consistent enough to determine the tracks along which action will be pushed by the dynamics of interests in India. For the time being, India's development planners and their academic advisers think that they have learned their lessons in Oxbridge or Haryale well, when they attempt to refute a Gandhian view of India as 'passive' or 'static'. They try to discover the functional prerequisites of an 'active' and 'dynamic' Hindu society. Dazzled as they are as a Westernized elite by the outward glitter of the 'iron cage' and its false promise of a rapid victory over suffering, they search for the modern short-cuts that will lead the country straight into it.²²

As a Westerner I remember that the systematic study of ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts started in Germany in the early nineteenth century. The first indologists, as the academics who specialized in the new field of ancient South Asian texts were called, have had a tremendous impact on the development of nationalist thought in India and Sri Lanka. Men like Max Muller and Wilhelm Geiger gave a new self-esteem to a growing intelligentsia who, with their help, rediscovered the 'glorious past' of their own countries. I also remember, moreover, the inspiring example of Alice Boner's work. She threw new light on the Sun Temple in Konark²³ and she helped to rediscover the heritage of the Kathakali tradition of Indian dance.²⁴ Just imagine that she and Uday Shankar had been unable to raise money in India in 1930, to finance a troupe of classical artistes since nobody dared to identify himself with vulgar native dance. "I dare say," wrote Uday Shankar to the Maharaja of Baroda in February 1930, "that in Europe Indian dance is now looked upon with much more reverence than in our own country."²⁶

The same holds true of Gandhi and his Sarvodaya concept which is more and more relevant for development thinking in

the West. This will become only too obvious during the Third Development Decade, which will reveal the final collapse of the modernization paradigm and its related strategies. At the same time, it is quite clear that South Asia's development elites cannot admit this. They must defend—at all costs—the foreign-oriented development theories and policies of their respective countries as the only justification for their own relative affluence. The moment they confess that the common man can never hope to attain this type of lifestyle, they will have to resign. Thus it will take some time yet for Gandhian concepts to be rediscovered in their country of origin. □

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GANDHI AND EDUCATION FOR PEACE

Walter Gardini

One of the most significant aspects of the multi-faceted Gandhi, is that which refers to education. Gandhi believed that the most effective means for political, social and cultural changes that he proposed was education. Some of his "Experiments with Truth" transform constantly into educative experiments of community life. His *Autobiography* reviews and evaluates them.

The first experiment took place in South Africa in 1904, followed by another more comprehensive one in the Tolstoy Farm in South Africa in 1910, and, finally in the *Satyagraha Ashram* at Sabarmati in India, near Ahmedabad and in Sevagram, not very far from Wardha. In his first book, *Hind Swaraj* (published in 1909) Gandhi devoted a chapter specifically to education.

The theme recurs in the pages of Gandhi periodicals *Young India* and *Harijan* till it reaches the national conference on education in Wardha (in 1937) at which Gandhi presented his concept of education. In the Wardha Plan, the educative method of Gandhi was reflected in good measure which he called *Nai Talim* (new education). What place does the education for peace have in this method?¹

The Starting Point: An Integral Education

The purpose of education according to Gandhi is the formation

of an integral man. He summarised it in three h's: *head, hand* and *heart* juxtaposed with three r's which were predominant in his time, *read, write, reckon*:

I affirm that educating the intellect can be good only by way of adequate exercise and discipline of body organs (hands, feet, eyes, ears); nevertheless the development of the mind and the body will be something miserably imbalanced until it goes side by side with the corresponding awakening of the soul. By spiritual discipline I mean the education of the heart. These three elements constitute an indivisible whole and it would be a big fallacy to suppose that these three faculties could develop in part or independent of each other. The human being is not mere intellect, or just a crude animal body, nor is it only heart or soul. A harmonious combination of the three faculties is the indispensable requisite in the formation of a complete man: for that purpose the real economy of education is coded there.

Of the three elements, the most important one is the formation of a strong and stable character based on the teachings of the last verses of the second chapter of the *Bhagvad Gita* which he used to recite as his daily prayer.

Then comes the "intelligent use of the body" that for him meant a constant training in manual work. At times it seems that the intellectual education herein gets marginalised or forgotten. However this is not so; he just wanted to give it the first place, contrary to what had usually been happening—and still happens.

Education on coexistence would fall within the framework of integral education. Education for peace had a very important place, it was in fact the centre of convergence of all activities.

"It is necessary" Gandhi wrote that students should learn the art of living peacefully, with a spirit of solidarity. What is the use of knowing many things if they do not know how to coexist peacefully with the neighbour? Gandhi experimented with various methods for achieving this goal.

In the first place he tried to form communities without the barriers that existed in his times between the sexes and among the social classes, and members of different religions. He repeatedly proclaimed the "essential unity" of all human beings. According to him all of us are "children of one and the same Creator, and all are tarred with the same brush".

He therefore, insisted that the doors of his ashram must be open to the untouchables, whom he called 'Harijans' (Children of God). They received the same treatment as everybody else in

matters of food, school, marriage and work. This was truly a revolution. It triggered opposition and hostility; which Gandhi faced with great courage and strength. He was prepared to fight even against Hinduism if it could be demonstrated that the segregation of the untouchables formed an essential part of it.

In the same way he fought against the prejudices that marginalised women. In his ashram, boys and girls, men and women, lived together. Gandhi exalted the women by calling them "the best part of humanity". He vindicated the equality of sexes even while acknowledging the diversities imposed by nature. He asked women to take part in social life and was convinced that his policy of non-violence was more easily followed by women than by men, owing to their greater capacity for sacrifice.

In the Ashram, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs were urged to live peacefully. Gandhi inculcated respect for all religions. "Every human being", wrote Gandhi "constituted a partial revelation of the Truth. If we see everybody on a plane of equality, we will not hesitate to introduce each acceptable aspect of other religions in our faith. The true knowledge of religion breaks the barriers between faiths." If I am a Hindu I should behave like a brother with the Muslims and other believers. I should not differentiate between people with distinct beliefs.

It is not surprising then that in this way, Gandhi could write that "All the inmates of the Tolstoy Farm considered each other as members of the same family." He reaches the same conclusion when he speaks of the early days of the Sabarmati Ashram: "We were some twenty-five persons, men and women from different parts of India, including five young Tamilians who had accompanied me from South Africa. We all lived together like one family."

The Roots of Peace

"Wars are born in the minds of men and it is in the minds of men that their germs should be destroyed" reads the foundation charter of the UNESCO.² Gandhi was always convinced of this and in accord with the tradition of India, he denounced egoism along in its three principal manifestations (the struggle for power, money worship and licentiousness) as the origin of all evil. He often cited a famous passage from the *Bhagvad Gita*: "when man erroneously focuses his attention on sensual objects, there emerges a sense of attachment for them, the attachment breeds desire and from desire originates anger. The anger results in error,

the error ruins reason and the ruin of reason means complete destruction."

And hence he instructs: it is imperative that each one of us should become the master of ourselves in order to defeat all tendencies of violence within us. He referred to the classical prohibitions and proposed them as oaths to be taken by the members of his community: not to kill, not to lie, sobriety, humility and control of the senses. Gandhi does not hide the difficulties that one must overcome in order to fulfil these vows. "The path to self-purification is slow and difficult" writes Gandhi in the last page of his autobiography. To achieve total purity, it is necessary to absolutely destroy the elements related to passion which are embedded in our thoughts, words and deeds; to be above the varying emotions of love and hate, attraction and repulsion. It occurs to me that the control of the most subtle of passions and desires, is more difficult than the conquest of the world with weapons."

It is easy to understand that this and only this is the real solution to all domestic, national and international conflicts. What methods did Gandhi propose for following this path?

A Programme of Action

Among the pledges that the members of his community were made to take, one (the ninth one) refers to courage and decision.

Gandhi always maintained that non-violence was not for cowards. It requires being "ready for sacrifice" "adhere strongly to truth", "doing away with any fear regarding the loss of goods, false honours, relatives and life itself cowardice is worse than violence and makes man an incapable and useless being." Strength does not arise from physical prowess but from an "indomitable will". Those who practise violence, like the soldiers in war are ready for anything and likewise should be those who want to practise non-violence.

Another pledge—the seventh one, is related to manual work according to the capacity and aptitude of each one. This was one of his favourite themes. He said that work was a means of strengthening the body, acquiring an integral education which goes beyond mere knowledge, bring about equality among all, promote common welfare and a spirit of service, affirm the superiority of man as a person in the face of an excessive and robotizing technology." "The hand is one of the gifts that differentiate man from animals."

"*Swadeshi*" is the name given to the eighth pledge which means defence of the native traditions and things. It is essential to keep in mind the political and social context of Gandhi's times i.e. an India culturally and politically dominated by England. Education for peace, for sacrifice, for renunciation should not have meant an unconditional giving up or a loss of one's own national and cultural identity."

While being open to the world Gandhi postulates the great principle: one should go to the universal through the particular. "Helping and serving the people around you is actually helping the world".

And around Gandhi was India with its history, its literature, its traditions and its languages. Gandhi saw it humiliated and exploited and thus proceeded to act against a ruling class comprising of English men and Indians, who wanted to "anglicize India", imposing a foreign language and customs. "By receiving an English style of education, we have enslaved the nation and betrayed the historical, ethnic and social traditions of the country". He therefore wanted Hindi to be taught as the future national language along with one of the 15 regional languages. This was to ensure that the child does not feel "a stranger in his own house" and through the language comes in contact with the entire cultural heritage.

Parents and Teachers

We have till now followed the eleven vows that Gandhi put forward as the basis of his communities and which synthesized his educative programme, for achieving peaceful coexistence.

There clearly appears the importance that Gandhi confers on community life. "Non-violence cannot be inculcated by an isolated person, one requires a community in which the individual can prove his capacity to face and overcome all difficulties."³

For Gandhi the first community was the family. In that the parents should educate the children with words and examples. The State, rendering its function by way of compulsory primary education, weakened the power of the parents. To minimise the harm it is necessary that those in charge of education maintain constant contact with the parents and above all, make the School a kind of family according to the above mentioned programme.

Gandhi outlined in his writings the ideal picture of the teacher and kept coming back repeatedly to this theme. He knew very well that the efficient education for peace, depended in a

good measure, on them. They should establish a “contact with the heart” of their students; know them individually, encourage them to be active members of the society, although their state of studentship impedes them from a true political commitment and educate them for self rule. The teacher should become a constant source of learning for his students.”

Spiritual Education

The final aspect of Gandhi’s educative programme is religious. It did not form part of the eleven basic vows of the community, but it was automatically understood as it formed part of the general atmosphere in which all activities took place.

Gandhi did not want a confessional religious education but a presentation of the basic universal ethics. All religions were to be respected with a firm faith in God “having known that strength comes from God and not from us, and violence triumphs only when there is a lack of genuine faith in God”.

In the chapter of his *Autobiography* entitled, “Spiritual Education”, he writes: “Education without spiritual culture is of no use and can even cause harm. Perfection, the absence of error, absolute control on thought etc. are impossible without total devotion to God and his grace.”

Evaluation

Gandhi’s ideas on education got a chance of being put into practice on an experimental level beyond his *ashrams*, in the various provinces of India, after the Wardha Educational conference in 1937. In 1940 the initial programme that constituted “Basic Education” for children was extended by Gandhi to include adolescents and adults. The central point of these experiments was teaching through manual work. It was conceived not only as having creative, but productive, value in order to achieve a self-sufficient economy for students and teachers alike.

The conflict with the government during the Second World War, Gandhi’s prolonged imprisonment and the lack of teachers with a spirit of service affected the results of these experiments.

After the attainment of independence and Gandhi’s death some *Nai Talim* schools continued functioning on an experimental level, but their introduction on the national level was considered utopian. Factors such as the emphasis on productive work with

an eye on the development of the local handicrafts, the seeming rejection of western culture and modernity, adversely affected the expansion of the project. Nevertheless, it continued in small communities in India thanks to the outstanding follower of Gandhi's ideals, namely, Vinoba Bhave, and in the West through the community of the Ark founded by another great disciple of Gandhi, Lanza del Vasto.

If it is true that the educative project of Gandhi is unlikely to be adopted on a national level, it contains the crux of the principles that constitute the soul of all sound education. These are: an integral education overcoming social, racial and religious barriers, joint participation of students and teachers, in activities of the school, and emphasis on ethical principles.

These ideas were dealt with by E.F. Schumacher in his widely circulated book in India and in the west.⁴ Schumacher was for some time adviser to the Indian Planning Commission.

"The modern man", he writes, "exalted by the progress of his powers constructed a system of production that destroys nature and creates a kind of society that mutilates man. It seems that the beautiful, the good, the true are too uncertain and subjective ideals to be adopted as the highest goals of the social and individual life and should be substituted in a more realistic sense by the constant quest for wealth and power". Schumacher strongly criticizes this last option on the basis of the reports of the Club of Rome and the ideals of Gandhi which he adopts. He repeats with Gandhi. "The starting point of man is not in the things that he possesses. One should prefer the smallest instead of the biggest, the simple instead of the ever complex. Only in this way there is possibility of peace and of technology with a human face."⁵

In a magnificent letter that Gandhi addressed to the great Italian educationist and pedagogist, Maria Montessori, who appreciated many of his educative principles it was stated that "If we want to achieve true peace in this world and if we really want to fight against war, we should start from the children".

The proposals of Gandhi, divested of some extreme postures, continue to be valid and everyone can be inspired by them.

□

Notes & References

1. The bibliography related with this theme is extensive. We have selected some works among the most important of Mahatma Gandhi:

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2. Gandhi wrote a letter to the scientist, Julian Huxley, wherein he introduced an innovation in the concept of human rights: "From my ignorant but wise mother I learnt that the rights which can be deserved originate from the well performed duty. We are justified in our demand of right to life only when we fulfil the duty of citizenship. With this basic declaration, perhaps it will be easier to define the rights of Man and Woman and link all the rights with some corresponding duty which should be fulfilled before. Any other kind of right will only be an usurpation which is not worth fighting for" (Various authors, *Los Derechos del Hombre*, Mexico, 1949).
3. In chapter XXIII of the fourth part of his *Autobiography*. Gandhi describes how he educated his sons and observes: "Children inherit the character of the parents not any lesser than their physical characteristics. The environment has its own importance, but the original capital with which the child starts his life is inherited from his parents. The Indian parents who educate their children so that they think and talk like the English from their childhood, betrayed their children and their country."
4. His most important work carries a very significant title: *Small is beautiful, A Study of Economics as if People Matter*, London, 1973, translation Milan, 1977, Ibid.
5. Ibid., pp. 345–49.

MAHATMA GANDHI: OUTDATED? OR STILL AHEAD?

Marjori E. Sykes

In October 1994 there are plans to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the birth of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Little more than three years later, in January 1998 it will be half a century since he died. In January 1948 he was assassinated by a Hindu militant who regarded him as the enemy of Hinduism. Scarcely more than a year ago, in December 1992, that same spirit of Hindu militancy inspired hundreds of men to attack and destroy, in defiance of the law, an ancient Muslim mosque in Ayodhya. Not long before his own death Gandhi had declared that "if my faith burns bright, as I hope it will even if I stand alone, I shall be alive in the grave, and what is more, speaking from it." Is that true? Is he still alive and speaking in 1992, 1993, 1994?

At one time we thought of Gandhi as "the father of the nation". It was an ambiguous title, for he himself looked upon any nation-state, independent or not, with a critical eye, because it involves centralised power maintained by force. India in the 1990's is such a state. The outrage at Ayodhya was followed by a reign of terror elsewhere, notably in the supposedly cosmopolitan city of Bombay, from which thousands of Muslims fled in fear of their lives. There, and elsewhere, centralised authority imposed "peace" by curfew, and maintained it by armed force.

Yet unnoticed, unpublicised by the media, Gandhi was alive and speaking in Bombay in 1992. He spoke through many little groups composed of people from all religious communities, who

set to work to heal the wounds, rebuild the wrecked homes, and re-awaken the latent neighbourly goodwill. These men and women pitted the power of mutual trust and united hard work against the divisive forces of militant communalism, and did so effectively.

This effectiveness was not achieved overnight, out of nothing. "To be able to act non-violently in a crisis," Gandhi wrote, "you need training. You have to alter your whole mode of life." He himself had altered his own mode of life, step by step over many years, in a series of what he called "experiments with Truth". In 1927, when he was approaching his sixtieth year, he told the story of these experiments in a partial autobiography. "Truth" for him was God, the Cosmic Power that upholds and indwells the whole creation.

The "experiments" were steps in a "pilgrim's progress" beset by the giants of anger, depression and despair, in the course of which, as he freely confessed, he sometimes made "Himalayan blunders". The light he followed was that of non-violence, and for him non-violence was no merely negative *ahimsa* (non-injury), it was positive, active compassion. He himself equated it with selfless love, and his commitment to it was a matter of faith. "I cannot prove," he wrote, "that love is the source and end of life. If it is not, if love (or non-violence) is not the law of our being, the whole of my argument falls to pieces. The only "proof" is in the "experience of living."

Many years before those words were written (in *Harijan*, 1936) experience of living in South Africa had convinced Gandhi that love or non-violence must mean fearlessness. If we fear to lose cherished possessions, we should renounce possession and become poor; if we fear to lose our good name, our freedom, our friends, we should renounce power and become vulnerable. We should, in fact, alter our whole mode of life. Gandhi's ashrams, in South Africa and in India, were planned to help men and women to practise this new mode of life and so to grow in fearlessness.

Secondly, non-violence means humility of mind. Cosmic Truth, as the Jains taught, is a many-sided diamond, revealed to many seekers in many facets; our human vision does not see the whole, no one has a monopoly of the Truth. And therefore we need to listen to one another, learn from one another, and so to see our seemingly conflicting insights as complementary aspects of That which is "the fullness of our partial sight".

Thirdly, in Gandhi's eyes non-violence means a whole-

hearted acceptance of one's place in the world, a contentment with the circumstances of one's birth and upbringing. There is a lyrical ring about the words he used: "The more I work at this law, the more I feel delight in life, in the scheme of this universe. It gives a meaning to the mysteries of nature, it gives me a peace that I have no power to describe." The experience was the basis of the principle of *swadeshi*, of pride in and reverence for the worth of one's own country, one's own local resources, one's own locally-rooted culture.

Fearlessness, humility, *swadeshi*: in these terms, so it seems to me, Gandhi is speaking from the grave of matters directly relevant to human needs today, not only in India.

It is easy to see how in modern life we are imprisoned in fear, in detail after detail of our personal lives; we lock our doors against the potentially dangerous stranger, we turn a blind eye to public misdemeanour because we fear to be "involved", and we justify ourselves by pointing to the rampant crimes and violence of a society which our own greed and ambition have helped to create. Fortunately that is not the whole truth. There are the fearless ones among us, who live their compassion; they may find inspiration in Gandhi's fearlessness just because he was, as he always insisted, an ordinary man like ourselves.

It is easy too to see how relevant is humility of mind, with its tolerance of differences, to the problems created by the political and sectarian fanaticisms of today. As 1993 draws to a close, annual "newsletters" from friends describe how their own children face rejection and scorn, even in school, because they are "different" in colour or race or culture from their classmates. And the same letters describe the children's response, their serious search for a better way which does not hate diversity but delights in it. Another letter comes from a city in U.S.A., which has just elected as Mayor a Black woman, (rejecting her White rival whose policy was to "get tough") and endorsed her efforts to heal social evils by imaginative compassion. Yet another letter quotes the prelude to a recent UNICEF report, *The Progress of Nations*: "The day will come when the progress of nations will be judged not by their military strength, nor by the splendour of their cities, but by the well-being of their peoples, the provision made for the vulnerable, the protection afforded to the children." In courageous children, in brave local leadership, in noble world vision, Gandhi has partners and followers today.

It may not be so easy to see the relevance of *swadeshi* to

life on a shrinking planet where modern means of communication have annihilated distance. The question is not new; it was being asked in India when I first arrived there in 1928.

Gandhi made it clear that *swadeshi* did not involve living like a frog in a well. His well-known saying sums it up: "I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, but *I refuse to be blown off my feet.*" Let the peoples of the world meet and mingle, but let them do so as sturdy self-reliant equals, who are content to supply their own needs from their own natural surroundings, and are not "blown off their feet" by envy of other people's possessions or by fear of their power.

Living temporarily in England I find the neglect of this principle disturbing in two ways. One is on the physical level. The shelves in the shops are laden with goods from all over the world, while *English* apples, *English* traditional cheeses, "oats and beans and barley," are in short supply. Only the exigencies of war, it seems, forced Britain to live (healthily, by all accounts) on what would grow in British gardens, fields and woods. Now, the great majority take the artificialities of the market for granted. Not many voices are raised for *swadeshi*, but there are some, though they do not use that term.

The other things that disturb me are on the psychological level. I see a seemingly complete lack of pride in the beauty of our neighbourhood, revealed in the carelessness with which the discarded cans and wrappers of our artificial foods disfigure the roadsides, hedgerows, woodlands, often in places where it is almost impossible for these eyesores to be removed by those we pay to clean up the mess we make! A fruit of the same mentality is the de-valuing of the village local school. People seem blind to its value as a potential centre of local knowledge, local skills, local caring; they prefer the "supermarket" form of schooling which uproots children from their own neighbourhood and often estranges them from the scenes of their home. There are increasing numbers who see, and struggle against, this evil also—and for whom Gandhi's principle of *swadeshi* may have meaning.

Gandhi himself wanted no "disciples"; he had no use for a "Gandhian sect". As his close friend (and critic) V.S. Srinivasa Sastri said, he wanted "clear-eyed and courageous fellow-travellers", who would be "fellow-worshippers of the Truth". May he find many such in 1994. □

GANDHI AND “THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS”

Dennis Dalton

The title of this piece relates to an article by Samuel P. Huntington entitled “The Clash of Civilizations?”, published in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer, 1993). It then provoked a vigorous debate that appeared in subsequent issues last year.

Huntington opens his article with the assertion that the nature and locus of world conflict has dramatically changed. For most of this century, conflicts occurred mainly within Western civilization as “Western civil wars”. Now with the end of the Cold War, conflict is no longer based primarily in the West but between Western and non-Western civilizations:

In the politics of civilizations, the peoples and governments of non-Western civilizations no longer remain the objects of history as targets of Western colonialism but join the West as movers and shapers of history. (p. 23).

Huntington then employs the concept of “civilization” as a category that explains and forecasts the dynamics of coming world conflicts:

The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating civilizations from one another... differences among civilizations are not only real; they are basic. Civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition, and, most important, religion... These differences are the product of centuries. They will not soon disappear. (p. 25).

While Huntington concedes that "differences do not necessarily mean conflict," he anticipates far more clashes than compromises.

The intent here is to speculate on how Gandhi might respond to Huntington's position. Although Huntington does not mention Gandhi, it was Gandhi more than any other non-Western figure who sparked the shift in power that Huntington describes. Once British imperialism was finished in India, a world movement of decolonialization began that marked the major conflicts of the later half of this century. Gandhi would probably agree with Huntington about the transfer of power to non-Western countries, but Gandhi would put a positive face on it by observing that it is overdue, and that the real challenge ahead is to learn how to handle conflict in a more constructive manner than the world has done in the era of Western domination.

Gandhi perceived conflict primarily not as a clash of civilizations but of different value systems. There are of course a multitude of such systems but because he was concerned chiefly with resolution of conflict, values connected with violence or non-violence interested him most. He believed that any civilization contained within itself values supporting theories and practices of violence or non-violence.

He associated physical or psychological violence not with any particular civilization, but with an attitude of mind that viewed others in terms of stereotypical categories, dividing people, assigning them identities or character traits according to caste or class, ethnicity or nationality. For example, the way that certain British colonialists characterized all Indians, in an abstract sense, as passive, cowardly and deceitful. Or as caste Hindus defined untouchables as impure and unclean. When he vehemently denounced the institution of untouchability, he was attacking a specific kind of value system that existed within Indian civilization.

But another system of values existed in India and had emerged at least as early as the "spiritual violence" that enforced untouchability. The tradition of *ahimsa* (non-violence), whether in Hinduism or Buddhism or Jainism, embodied a spirit that defined Gandhi's personal and political purpose. His achievement was to put this spirit into practice: to demonstrate that Indian civilization, like any civilization, had capacities for non-violent as well as violent social and political action.

From the moment he emerged on the national scene in 1919, he came as a reformer, contending with caste Hindus that un-

touchability stained Indian civilization, and with both Hindus and Muslims that India could never be free until it attained communal harmony. In each instance, Gandhi steadfastly maintained an inclusivist stance, urging the sectarian, separatist elements in India to place the common interest of the country above their particular, partisan religious or caste interests.

One need not search far through Gandhi's public career for examples of this inclusivist spirit in practice because there are so many of them. Yet the quintessential elements of this spirit emerge especially at the end of his life, as he struggled for communal harmony in the midst of India's civil war. No purer illustration of his method and purpose exists than his Calcutta fast of September, 1947. This action offers an instructive response to Huntington's thesis because it shows how bitter conflicts occur within civilizations, with one dramatic element of the conflict within the religion of Hinduism itself, that is, between Gandhi and the Hindus, so enraged at his tolerance of Muslims that they would eventually kill him. The Calcutta fast offers a lesson not in a clash of civilizations, but of value systems, specifically of religious values, between those who espouse religious tolerance, compassion and reverence for life, and those who do not. Gandhi saw the clash in terms of contesting views of truth, insisting that his approach to human relationships "excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing absolute truth and, therefore, not competent to punish." He often connected his views on violence and non-violence with truth in this manner, as in his statement that "no one has the right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth." (*Collected Works*, 19: 466; 46: 216).

Picture the scene of virtual civil war in Calcutta, with its large Muslim minority; unprecedented street violence began in August, 1946 with the "Great Calcutta Killing" of over 4,000 Hindus and Muslims in 48 hours, and then continued unabated until the following August when India and Pakistan achieved independence. Fear and fury swept through the streets of Calcutta in this terrible year of communal massacres as the city, divided into two armed camps, came together only to inflict more daily violence on one another. The *Calcutta Statesman* recorded the grim statistics of the daily casualties, making it clear that neither police nor military could contain the slaughter. Into this cauldron stepped Gandhi in mid-August with one purpose, to bring peace to Calcutta.

He first moved into the home of a Muslim friend. When his

example did not stop the killing, he began a fast for communal harmony, announcing that the fast would end when peace returned to the city. At first, in the initial 24 hours of the fast, the violence continued, but then, as his condition worsened (he was then 78 years old), the people of Calcutta responded. Students, business groups, trade unions, members of the press, all began to bring down the barricades and call for Hindu-Muslim unity. Gandhi broke his fast not just when the killing stopped, but only after representatives of all communities assured him that the violence would not return. The fast had lasted 73 hours and its achievement was spectacular. C. Rajagopalachari, who had been closely associated with Gandhi for decades, observed: "Gandhiji has achieved many things, but in my considered opinion, there has been nothing, not even independence, which is so truly wonderful as his victory over evil in Calcutta." (*The Statesman*, September 6, 1947, p. 1) This has also been the verdict of history. E.W.R. Lumby, among the closest historians of partition, wrote: "His triumph was complete and the peace that he brought was destined to endure... He had in fact worked a miracle, perhaps the greatest of modern times." (*The Transfer of Power in India*, p. 193)

Huntington writes that the "historic clash between Muslim and Hindu in the sub-continent manifests itself now not only in the rivalry between Pakistan and India, but also in intensifying religious strife within India between increasingly militant Hindu groups and India's Muslim minority." (pp. 33–34) Gandhi's response to this, amply evident in his leadership, would have been that any religion, Hinduism, Islam or another, is capable of more than intolerant extremism and persecution. Not only Gandhi, but prominent Hindus such as Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and leaders and reformers of modern times Rabindranath Tagore espoused a religion of tolerance compatible with a secular India because its vision is consistent with the ideals of democracy.

Huntington concludes his article on an upbeat note with a call for coexistence based on "a more profound understanding of the basic religious and philosophical assumptions underlying other civilizations..." (p. 49) This admirable aim of mutual understanding may be advanced best through Gandhi's approach to non-violent conflict resolution, a method that found inspiration from several different civilizations but insisted on a common appreciation of the enduring unity of our being. □

CONTRIBUTORS

ALEC ERWIN—Deputy Finance Minister of South Africa.

ANTHONY J. PAREL—is Professor of Political Science at the University of Calgary, Calgary, Canada; presently engaged in writing an annotated book on Gandhi's '*Hind Swaraj*'.

ANTONY COPLEY—Reader in Modern History, University of Kent, Canterbury, U.K.

ARUN GANDHI—grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and a journalist by profession; established the Gandhi Institute for Non-Violence in 1991 in the United States; author of several books.

BEN KINGSLEY—British actor; recipient of several awards including Padma Shri.

B.R. NANDA—Historian, Formerly Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; author of *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*; *Gandhi and His Critics*; *Gandhi, Pan Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism*, *The Nehrus Gokhale* and other books.

CATHERINE CLEMENT—In-charge of artistic exchanges at an international level in the Ministry of External Affairs for several years (General Secretary of the "Year of India" in France and Counsellor for the "Festival of France" in India). She is also a novelist and has published several books related to India.

CHARANVIT KASETSIRI—student of international relations, history and philosophy, recipient of several awards including King Bhumibol Prize (1963); author of several books.

CORETTA SCOTT KING—American singer, poet and Civil Rights Campaigner; President, Martin Luther King Junior Foundation.

DAISAKU IKEDA—Third President of Soka Gakkai (since 1960),

the largest organisation of Buddhist lay Believers; author of several books.

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN—served under four American Presidents; presently the senior Senator from New York; member of the US Congress since 1976; served as the US Ambassador to India in 1973–74; author of several books.

DENNIS DALTON—Professor of Political Science at Barnard College of Columbia University in New York; author of several books on Gandhi such as *Gandhi During Partition: A Case Study in the Nature of Satyagraha*; *The Dandi Drama*, *Gandhi, Individual Freedom and Social Action*.

DETLEF KANTOWSKY—Presently Professor of Sociology at the University of Konstanz, Germany; specialist on India Studies, has published several books on India.

DIETMAR ROTHERMUND—Indologist, presently Executive Director of South Asia Institute, Heidelberg University; author of several books on India.

ENRIQUE GALLUD JARDIEL—Teaches Spanish Philosophy at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

FATIMA MEER—presently Director of the Institute for Black Research in the University of Natal; Executive Member of Gandhi Memorial Committee and the Member of the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) Board of Directors; founder and First President of The Federation of Black Women in South Africa which was banned in 1976; author of several books.

FREDRICO MAYOR ZARAGOZA—Nominated Deputy Director-General to UNESCO (1978–81); Director General (since 1987); worked in the field of scientific research, biochemistry and pharmacy; author of several books.

GAMINI LAKSHMAN PEIRIS: (b.1946)—Minister of Justice and constitutional Affairs and Deputy Minister of Finance of the Government of Sri Lanka; a prominent member of the Sri Lankan Cabinet and an important leader of the SLFP and the people's Alliance.

GEDONG BAGOES OKA—Founder of 'Shanti Dasa', a Gandhian Ashram in Bali, Indonesia; recipient of Jamnalal Bajaj Award, 1994 for service to Gandhian ideals outside India.

GERALD O'BRIEN—senior political figure, Member of the New Zealand Labour Party 1938–78; Senior Vice President of Labour Party 1974–77; Member of Parliament 1969–78.

GILBERT ETIENNE—Professor of Development Economics in the

Graduate Institute of International Studies, University of Geneva with special interest in 'Indian Economy'; reputed specialist in India Studies and an acknowledged authority on Gandhian thought.

HAMAD BAKARI MSCHINDO—Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Information, Cultural, Tourism and Youth in the Govt. of Zanzibar.

HERBERT FISCHER—Worked with Gandhi in 1936 at the Wardha Ashram devoting himself to social work in the rural areas of central India; worked for many years with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the former GDR; served in India between 1958 and 1962 and later as Consul General of the GDR to India between 1965 and 1974, was the first Ambassador of the GDR to India; author of several books.

IMMACOLATA MOSCARITOLO—Journalist, currently Chief Editor, *Proteo*.

JACQUES HEBERT—Former journalist, broadcaster and publisher; author of several books.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU—First Prime Minister of Independent India; educated at Harrow and Cambridge. Originally intended to practise at the bar, but joined the Indian National Congress and the struggle for Indian freedom; author of several books including *Autobiography* (1936), *The Discovery of India* (1946), etc.

JEAN COMAIR—Jesuit priest; recipient of several awards and author of many books.

J. GEORGE WAARDENBURG—Professor of development planning with a special interest in small scale and rural industries in India and China.

JOSE A. LUTZENBERGER—Brazilian agronomist and naturalist, known in Brazil as the Father of Brazil's Environmental Movement, internationally acknowledged expert on soil science and organic fertilizers.

JUDITH WATT—Journalist, Writer and Researcher in Art and Architecture from Johannesburg.

KARUNA KUSALASAYA—Indologist from Thailand, author of several books.

KENNETH D. KAUNDA—Prime Minister of N. Rhodesia. Jan-Oct, 1964; First President of Zambia, Oct. 1964; recipient of several international awards including Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding; author of several books includ-

ing *Black Government* (1961); *Zambia shall be Free* (1962); *A Humanist in Africa* (1966), etc. etc.

LORD ATTENBOROUGH—British film actor, producer and director; author of several books including *In Search of Gandhi* (1982), *A Pictorial Record* (1987).

LORD BOTTOMLEY—British Diplomatist; author of several books.

LORD LISTOWEL—British philosopher and politician; author of several books.

LUCIAN BLAGA—Eminent poet and philosopher from Romania.

MARIETTE STEPANIANTS—Currently Director, 7th East-West Philosopher's Conference, University of Hawaii, USA; author of several books.

MARJORIE SYKES—became an Indian citizen in 1950; worked in Shantiniketan with Rabindranath Tagore; in 1957 Acharya Vinoba Bhave invited her to convene the first all India Shanti Sena (Peace Army) Committee; her published works include biographies of Rabindranath Tagore and C.F. Andrews, translations of Vinoba Bhave's *Thoughts on Education* and other works.

MARY ROBINSON—President, Republic of Ireland.

MATTHIAS REICHL—Civil Servant in the Salzburg Provincial Administration; from 1967 onwards, activist in interreligious organisations for peace, development, social and human rights.

MEWA RAMGOBIN—presently elected Member of the National Assembly of South Africa; author of several books.

MICHEL POUSSE—Senior Professor in the University of Reunion; has been writing books and articles on Indian subjects.

MILOSLAV KRASA—Czech Indologist specializing in modern Indian History; author of several books on Indian History and Culture.

M.C. VINOD SHARMA—Principal, Fiji College of Agriculture and journalist.

MOCHTAR LUBIS—influenced by Gandhian principles since his youth when he became active in Indonesian Nationalist politics during the Dutch Colonial Era; recipient of several international awards, including the Ramon Magsasay Award (1958).

MOHAMMED ANEES—Journalist in Arabic.

NARSULTAN ABISHEVICH NAZARBAEV—President of Republic of Kazakhstan since 1990.

NELSON MANDELA—President of South Africa; recipient of several awards including Jawaharlal Nehru Award (1979), Bharat Ratna (1990) etc.

OMAR-EL-HAQQAQ—A Syrian Professor at Aleppo University.

PETER HITJITEVI KATJAVIVI—Member of Parliament, Namibian National Assembly (1990–91); Vice Chancellor, University of Namibia from September 1992 till date.

PETER STOREY—Bishop of the South Western Transvaal District of the Methodist Church in South Africa; Chaplain to President Nelson Mandela in Robin Island Prison.

PHILIP EDWARD ARCHER—Chief Justice of Ghana from April 1991 to date.

RAJMOHAN GANDHI—Chief Editor, *Himmat*, a Bombay weekly, from 1964 to 1981; formerly Resident Editor of the *Indian Express*, Madras; author of biography of Sardar Patel.

R. RAJ SINGH—Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy at Brock University St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada.

SHIMON PERES—Foreign Minister of Israel since 1992; awarded Noble Peace Prize for 1994 in recognition of his contribution to Middle East Peace Process.

SON SOUBERT—presently Second Vice-President of the National Assembly, belongs to BLDP Party; student of Indology.

SRIMATI KAMALA—recipient of numerous awards for her service to the community and her propagation of Gandhian ideals; author of several books such as *Mahatma Gandhi: An American Profile*, *Frontiers of the Spirit*, *The Mystic Cross* etc.

U. BISSOONDOYAL—Presently Director, Mahatma Gandhi Institute in Mauritius; author of several books.

UNTO TAHTINEN—Currently teaches Indian Philosophy and Gandhian thought at various Finish Universities; UNESCO fellow, 1966–67.

VASANT SATHE—(b.1925)—President, Indian Council for Cultural Relations; freedom fighter; author of several books.

VICTOR IVBULIS—Indologist & Professor at the Department of Oriental Studies, University of Latvia; author of several books on India.

WALTER GARDINI—Head of Department of Comparative History of Religions, in the University of Salvador, Argentina; author of several books.

WANG SHUYING—Professor Institute of Asia Pacific Studies,

Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; recipient of numerous awards and author of several books on India.

W. RICHARD JACOBS—Presently Senior Lecturer in Political Economy at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine; Ambassador to former Soviet Union (1982–84); author of several books.

YASH PAL TANDON—Well-known political economist, born and bred in Uganda; presently resident in Zimbabwe; engaged in various writing projects.

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B. R. Nanda, formerly Founder-Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, is a leading historian of modern India and is the author of several books such as *Mahatma Gandhi : A Biography; Gandhi, Pan-Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism in India; Gandhi and His Critics; In Gandhi's Footsteps; The Nehrus, Gokhale, the Indian Moderates and the British Raj.*

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